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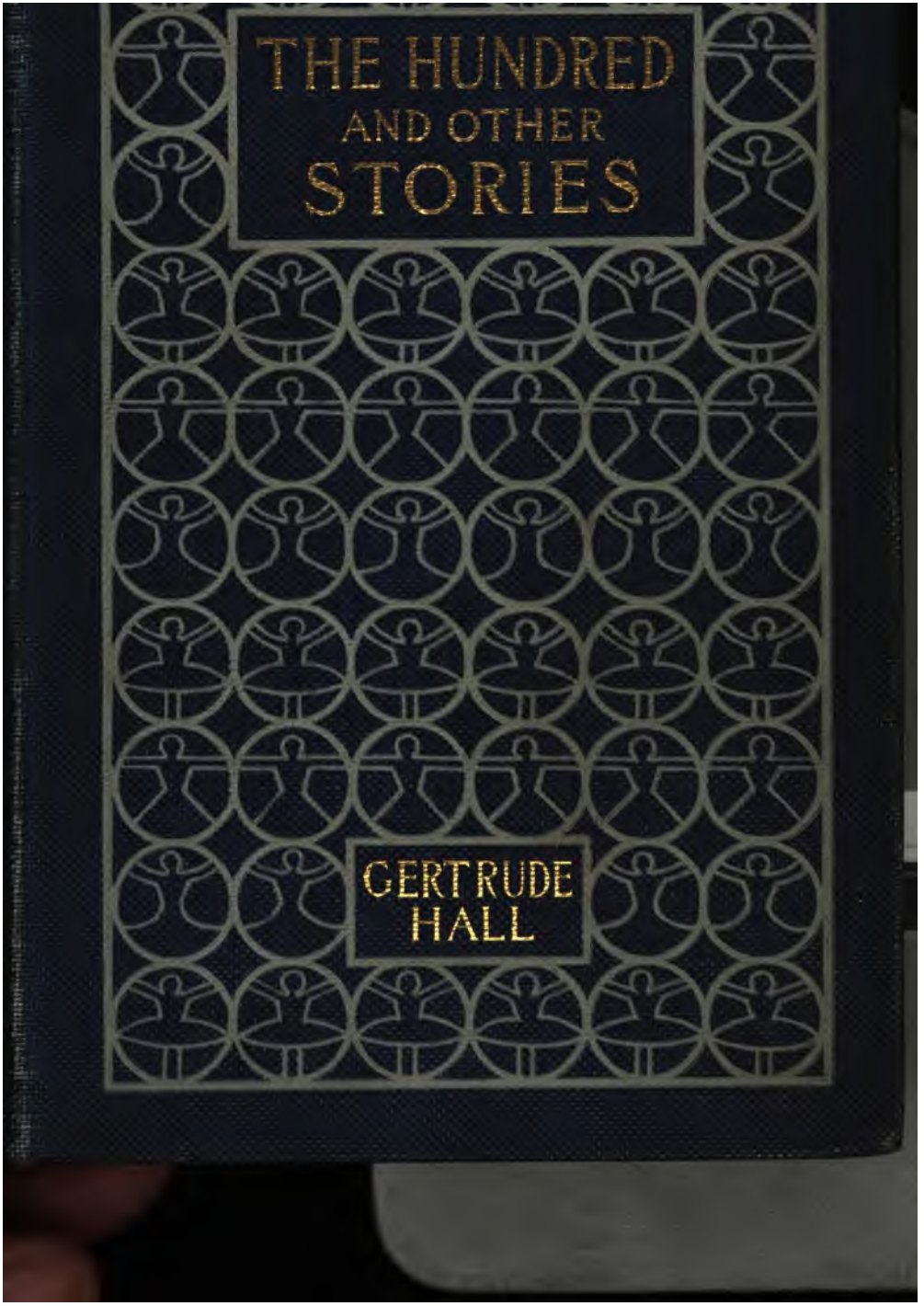
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THE HUNDRED
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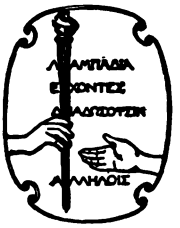
"SHE LOOKED AT HIM A LONG MOMENT WITH FIXED EYES"

The Hundred

and Other Stories

By GERTRUDE HALL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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TO

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THE HUNDRED

AND OTHER STORIES

THE HUNDRED

MRS. DARLING was dining from home, and every heart in her little establishment rejoiced over the circumstance, for it meant less work for everybody, with an opportunity to enjoy Christmas Eve on his own account.

Mrs. Bonnet, the lady's-maid, with the plans she had in mind for the evening, was scarcely annoyed at all when her mistress scolded because the corset-lace had got itself in a knot.

The chamber was full of a delicate odor of iris. The gas-globes at the ends of their jointed gold arms looked like splendid yellow pearls; on the dressing-table under them glittered a quantity of highly embossed silverware, out of all reasonable proportion with the little person owning it, who sat before

the mirror beautifying her finger-nails while Mrs. Bonnet did her hair.

"Mind what you are about," the mistress murmured, diligently polishing.

Mrs. Bonnet instantly removed the hot tongs from the tress she was twisting, and caught it again with greater precaution.

"Mind what you are about," warned Mrs. Darling, somewhat louder, a beginning of acid in her voice.

Mrs. Bonnet again disengaged the hair from the tongs, and after a little pause, during which to make firm her nerve, with infinite solicitude took hold again of the golden strand, and would have waved it, but—

"Mind what you are about!" almost screamed little Mrs. Darling. "Didn't I *tell* you to be careful? You have been pulling right along at the same hair! *Do* consider that it is a human scalp, and not a *wig* you are dealing with! Bonny, you are not a bad woman, but you will wear me out. Come, go on with it; it is getting late."

Before the hair-dressing was accomplished Mrs. Darling rolled up her eyes—her blue

eyes, round and angelic as they could sometimes be—at the reflection of Mrs. Bonnet's face in the mirror, and said, meekly: "Bonny, do you think that black moiré of mine would make over nicely for you? I am going to give it to you. No, don't thank me—it makes me look old. Now my slippers."

While Bonnet was forcing the shoe on her fat little foot, Mrs. Darling's glance rested, perhaps by chance, on a photograph that leaned against the clock over the mantelpiece. It was that of a still young, well-looking man, whose face wore an unmistakable look of goodness, of the kind that made it what one expected to read under it in print—the Rev. Dorel Goodhue. There was another more conspicuous man-photograph in the room, on the dressing-table, in a massive frame that matched the toilet accessories. It stood there always, airing a photographic smile among the brushes and hand-glasses and pin-boxes.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Darling, while she braced herself against Bonnet to help get the small shoe on—"I suppose I have a very

bad temper!" and she laughed in such a sensible, natural, good-natured way any one must have felt that her exhibition of a moment before had been a sort of joke. "Tell the truth, Bonny: if every mistress had to have a certificate from her maid, you would give me a pretty bad one, wouldn't you? But I was abominably brought up. I used to slap my governesses. And I have had all sorts of illnesses; trouble, too. And I mostly don't mean anything by it. It is just nerves. Poor Bonny! I treat you shamefully, don't I?"

"Oh, ma'am," said the lady's-maid, expanding in the light of this uncommon familiarity, "I would give you a character as would make it no difficulty in you getting a first-class situation right away; you may depend upon it, ma'am, I would. Don't this shoe seem a bit tight, ma'am?"

"Not at all. It is a whole size larger than I wear. If you would just be so good as to hold the shoe-horn properly. There, that is it."

She stood before the bed, on which were

spread two long evening dresses. A little King Charles spaniel had made himself comfortable in the softest of one. His mistress pounced on him with a cry, first cuffed, then kissed and put him down. "Which shall I wear?" she asked.

Bonnet drew back for a critical view, but dared not suggest unprompted.

"The black and white is more becoming, but the violet crape is prettier. Oh, Bonny, decide quickly for me, like a tossed-up penny!"

"Well, I think now I should say the violet, ma'am."

"Should you?" Mrs. Darling mused, with a finger against her lip. "But I look less well in it. Surely I had rather look pretty myself than have my dress look pretty, hadn't I? Give me the black and white, and hurry. Mr. Goodhue will be here in a second. Bonnet!" she burst forth, in quite another tone. "You trying creature! Didn't I *tell* you to put a draw-string through that lace? Didn't I *tell* you? *Where* are your ears? *Where* are your senses? What on

earth do you spend your time thinking about, I should like to know, anyway? I wouldn't wear that thing as it *is*, not for— not for— Oh, I am tired of living surrounded by fools! Take it away—take it away! Bring the violet!"

At last she was encased in the fluffy violet crape, and at sight of the sweet picture she made in the mirror her brow cleared a little; she looked baby-eyed and angelic again, with her wavy hair meekly parted in the middle. While she looked at herself she let Bonnet have one of her arms to button the long glove.

"Ouch! Go softly; you pinch!" she murmured.

Bonnet changed her method with the silver hook, adjusted it anew, and pulled at it ever so softly.

"Ouch! You pinch me!" said Mrs. Darling, a little louder.

Bonnet stopped short, and looked helplessly at the glove, that could not be made to meet without strain over the plump white wrist. After a breathing-while, with



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stealthy gentleness, again she fitted the silver loop over the button, and, with a devout inward appeal to Heaven, tried to induce it through the button-hole. She had almost succeeded when Mrs. Darling screamed, "Ouch, ouch, ouch! You pinch like *anything!* I am black and blue!" And tearing her arm from the quaking servant, began fidgeting with the button herself, soon pulling it off.

"Bonnet, how many times must I tell you to sew the buttons fast on my gloves before you give them me to put on?" she asked, severely. "No, they were not!" she stormed, and peeled off the glove, throwing it far from her, inside out.

There was a knock, and a respectful voice saying, outside the door, "Mr. Goodhue is below, ma'am."

"Get a needle," Mrs. Darling said, humbly, like a child reminded of its promise to behave, and waited patiently while the button was sewed on, and held out her arm again, letting Bonnet pinch without a murmur.

A final bunch of violets was tucked in the bosom of her gown, and she was leaving the bedroom, when, as if at a sudden thought, she turned back, went to the door of a little room leading from it, and stood looking in.

"Aren't they lovely, the hundred of them?" she gushed. "Did you ever see such a sight? One prettier than the other! I almost wish I were one of the little girls myself!"

"Them that gets them will be made happy, sure, ma'am. I suppose it's for some Christmas-tree?"

"They are for my cousin Dorel's orphans. Pick up, Bonny. Open the windows. Mind you keep Jetty with you. Don't let him go into the kitchen. I am sure they feed him. I shall not be very late—not later than twelve."

Mrs. Darling went down the stairs, followed by Bonnet with her mantle and fan, and Jetty, who leaped and yapped in the delusion that he was going to be taken for a walk.

The gentleman waiting below came forward to take Mrs. Darling's hand.

Mrs. Bonnet listened to the exchange of

polite expressions between them with no small degree of impatience; it seemed to her they might just as well have made these communications later, in the carriage.

At last and at last they were gone. With the clap of the door behind them the whole atmosphere of the house changed as by enchantment. A door slammed somewhere; a voice burst out singing below-stairs; the man in livery who had held the door for Mrs. Darling and her reverend cousin leaned over the banisters and shouted, heartily, "Catherine! I say, Catherine!" Mrs. Bonnet fairly scampered up-stairs, with the mistaken Jetty, who thought this was the beginning of a romp, hard after her, trying to catch her by the heels.

She entered Mrs. Darling's room with no affectation of soft-stepping, threw up the window—the sharp outer air cut into the scented warmth like a silver axe—and began pushing things briskly into their places. She digressed from her labors a moment to get from the closet a black moiré, which she examined, then replaced.

Now came a rap at the door, and a voice only a shade less respectful than before, saying, "Miss Pittock is waiting below, ma'am."

"Very well, I will be down directly," said Mrs. Bonnet. "Come here, Jetty!"

Jetty, instead of coming, ran round and round among the chair legs, waving his tail in a graceful circle, eluding Mrs. Bonnet's hand not by swiftness, but craft.

"Come here, you little fool," muttered Bonnet; and as her bidding, however severe, availed nothing, she cast Mrs. Darling's wrapper over the little beast, and got him entangled like a black-and-tan butterfly in a pocket-handkerchief. She snatched him up squirming a little, tucked him tightly under her arm, and ran up-stairs to her own chamber on the third floor. There she dropped him; and when she had donned her black coat and bonnet, gloves and galoshes, during which preparations Jetty was leaping and yapping like crazy, in the supposition again that they were going for a walk together, she turned out the light and shut the door against his wet, black nose. His reproach-



"AT LAST THEY WERE GONE"

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ful barks followed her down the passage. "It's good for 'is lungs," she said, grimly, hurrying over the stairs.

And here at the foot was Miss Pittock, looking quite more than the lady in her mistress's last year's cape.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting, Miss Pittock."

"Quite the contrary; don't mention it, Mrs. Bonnet. Oh, the shops is a sight to behold, Mrs. Bonnet! I never seen anything like this year. It do seem as if people made more to-do than they used about Christmas, don't it? Are we ready, Mrs. Bonnet?"

"I am if you are, Miss Pittock."

"Now, what kind of shops do you fancy most, so we'll go and look into their show-windows first?"

"I'm sure I don't know. What do you prefer yourself, Miss Pittock? We've time to see most everything of any account, anyhow. She's not coming home before twelve."

"No more is mine. Suppose we go first to the Grand Bazar. They've always got

the most amazing show there. That you, Mr. Jackson? A merry Christmas to you, Mr. Jackson, and a happy New Year!"

For just as they reached the door they found the butler letting himself out too. He did not sleep in the house, and was taking the opportunity to-night to leave early. For a second he could not return Miss Pittock's salutation, his mouth being crowded with a last bite snatched in haste. When he had swallowed, he grinned and excused his hurry, holding the door for the ladies.

"Sorry I ain't going your way, ladies," he said, amiably, and the door closed behind the three.

In the kitchen the cook, with a face like a pleasant copper saucepan, rosy and shining and round, was moving about leisurely, giving this and that a final unhurried wipe. She wore a face of contentment; it was her legitimate night out; with a good conscience presently she was going up to make a change, and off to her family.

A young woman in a light gingham and frilled cap sat watching her sulkily, her

hands idle on her embroidered muslin apron. A girl of perhaps eighteen, capless, in a dark calico that made not the first pretension to elegance, was washing her face at one of the shiny copper faucets. She vanished a moment, and came back with her damp hair streaked all over by the comb. The cook was gone.

"You going, too, I suppose?" said the sullen parlor-maid.

"Why, yes. 'Ain't I done everything? There's no need of my staying, is there?" The kitchen-maid went home for the night, too.

"No, I don't suppose there is. I just thought you might happen to be, that's all."

The kitchen-maid sat down a minute, in a tired, ungirt position, and looked over at the parlor-maid with good-natured young eyes grown a trifle speculative. The latter let her glance wander over the day's newspaper, brought down-stairs until inquired for.

"Tell you what I'd like to do!" exclaimed the kitchen-maid.

"What 'd you like to do, Sally?"

"That's to come back again after I've been home for just a minute."

The parlor-maid looked up, unable altogether to conceal her interest. The house was very quiet. Through the clock-ticks, at perfectly regular intervals, came the muffled sound of Jetty's disconsolate yaps. Neither of the girls appeared to hear them.

"You don't mean just to oblige, do you, Sally?"

"Well, I'd do it in a minute for nothing else beside, but that ain't quite all I was thinking of just this once. Miss Catherine"—she hesitated, then, enthusiastically—"have you seen 'em up-stairs? the whole hundred of 'em laid out off Mrs. Darling's bedroom? I saw 'em when Mrs. Bonnet she sent me up for the lamps to clean. Law! Wouldn't any child like to see a sight like that! There's a little girl in my tenement, she'd just go crazy. Do you think there'd be any harm in it if I was to bring her over and let her get one peep? She's as clean a child as ever you saw. She comes of dreadful poor folks, but just as respectable! She never

seen anything like it in her life. Law, what would I have done when I was a young one if I'd seen that? I'd thought I was dead and gone to heaven. I say, Miss Catherine, d' you think any one would mind?"

"How 'll they know?" said Miss Catherine, callously. "Look here, Sally; you go along just as fast as you can and fetch your young one. And when you've got back, perhaps I'll step out a minute, two or three doors up street, and you can answer the bell while I'm gone. Now hurry into your things. I'll give you your car fare."

"Miss Catherine, you're just as good as you can be, and I'll do something to oblige you, too, some time," said Sally, her face aglow with delight; and having hurried into her jacket and tied up her head in a worsted muffler, was off.

She almost ran over the packed snow down the street. She had soon left the quiet rows of private dwelling-houses and come where hundreds of lights glittered across the rose-tinged snow. At every few rods a street band tootled and blared, cov-

ering the scraping of snow-shovels and jingle of bells. "How gay it is!" she thought; "won't it be a treat!"

She plunged into a mean, small street, leading off a mean but tawdry larger one, where things hung outside the shops with their prices, written large, pinned on them, and had soon come to the house where her family lived.

She went in like a great gust of fresh air. In less than five minutes she came out, leading by the hand a little girl who, from being very much bundled up about the shoulders, and having brief petticoats above thin black legs, looked top-heavy. She was obliged to nearly run to keep up with Sally, and was trying to get out words through the breathlessness occasioned by hurrying and laughing and coming so suddenly into the frosty air.

"Oh, lemme guess, Sal, and tell me when I'm hot. Is it made of sugar?"

"No, it ain't."

"But you said it was a treat, didn't you, Sally?"

"I did that. But ain't there all sorts of treats? There's going to the circus, for instance. That hasn't any sugar."

"Is it a circus, Sally? Is it a circus?"

"No, it ain't a circus, but it's every bit as nice."

"Is it freaks, Sally? oh, tell me if it's freaks? It isn't? Are you sure I shall like it very much? It's nothing to eat, and it's nothing I can have to keep, and it's not a circus. What color is it? You'll answer straight, won't you?"

"Oh, it's every color in the world, and striped and polka-dotted and crinkled and smooth. There's a hundred of it."

The child would have stopped short on the sidewalk the better to centre her mind on guessing, but Sally dragged her briskly along. At the top of the street they came to a standstill.

"What is it?" asked the child.

"We're going to take the car," said Sally, grandly.

"O—h!" breathed the child.

"I guess you never stepped on to one of

these before. This, Tibbie, is nothing but the beginning. Hi! Hi!"

The swiftly gliding, fiery, formidable car stopped, and the hoarse buzz died out in a grinding of brakes; the light was dimmed a minute, then flared out again, as if the monster had winked. Sally and Tibbie climbed on; it moved, banging and whirring on its farther way. They had to stand, of course, but what of that? Tibbie looked all about with her shining, intelligent brown eyes, and felt a flush of gratified pride to see Sally, when the conductor had squeezed himself near, pay like the others; it had seemed impossible that some compromise should not have to be made with him. She slipped her hand in Sally's, and was too occupied with the people and the colored advertisements to talk.

"Did you get anything for Christmas yet, Tibbie?"

She moved her head up and down, bestowing all her attention on a parcel-laden woman bound to drop something the next time she stirred.

"What did you get?"

"A doll's flat-iron and a muslin bag of candy. I put the iron on to heat, and it melted. I gave what was left to Jimmy."

"Who gave them to you?"

"Off the Sunday-school tree. But there were no lights on it, because it was daytime. Sally, I know something that has a hundred—"

"What's that? Let's see if you've got it now?"

Tibbie looked a little shamefaced, then said, "A dollar—is a hundred cents."

"Well, and would I be bringing you so far just to show you a dollar? This is worth as much as a dollar, every individual one of them. Tibbie, it's just the grandest sight you ever seen—pink and blue and yellow and striped—"

Tibbie, who was looking Sally fixedly in the face, as if to see if her secret anywhere transpired, now almost shouted, "It's marbles!"

"Aw, but you're downright stupid, Tibbie. I don't mind telling you I'm disap-

pointed. You're just a common, every-day sort of young one, with no idear of grandness in your idears at all. And you don't seem to keep a hold on more than one notion at a time. First it's a dollar. Is that pink and blue? And next it's marbles. Is marbles worth a dollar apiece? Now tell me what's the grandest, prettiest thing that ever you saw—"

". . . Angels."

" D' you ever see any?"

" In the church window, painted."

" Well, this is as handsome as a hundred angels, less than a foot tall, all in new clothes, with little hats on."

" Sally, I think I know now. Only it couldn't be that. There couldn't likely be a hundred of them all together, for, oh, Sally, it isn't a store we are going to! You didn't tell me it was a store."

" No more it is. We're going straight to Mrs. Darling's house, and no place but there. Here's where we get off."

The big girl, with the small one, alighted and turned into the quieter streets, Tibbie,

as before, almost running to keep up with her long-legged friend.

They went into Mrs. Darling's by the back door. In the kitchen stood Miss Catherine in a coat with jet spangles and a hat with nodding plumes, pulling on a pair of tight kid gloves.

Tibbie at sight of her hung back, murmuring to Sally, "You didn't tell me! You didn't tell me!"

"Now, you'll be sure she don't touch anything, Sally," said Miss Catherine, looking Tibbie over.

"Naw! She won't hurt anything. I've told her I'll skin her if she does."

"Are her hands clean? You'd better give them a wash, anyhow."

Tibbie dropped her eyes, a little mortified.

"All right! I'll wash 'em," said Sally.

"She'd better scrape her boots thoroughly on the mat, too, before going up."

"I'll look after all that, Miss Catherine. Just you go long with an easy mind."

"Well, I'm off. I won't be long. Why don't you give her a piece of that cake? It's

cut. But make her eat it down here. Good-night, little girl. I guess you never was in a house like this before. Good-night, Sal. Is my hat on straight?"

She was gone, and the whole house now belonged to Sally and Tibbie. They looked at each other in silence a moment; the glee they felt came shining to the surface of their faces and made them grin broadly at each other.

"She's particular, ain't she?" said Sally.

"I just as soon wash them again, but they're clean. I thought you said she was gone off to a party and going to be gone till real late."

"Law!" roared Sally, and plumped down to contort herself in comfort. "She thought it was Mrs. Darling herself! Law! law!"

Tibbie laughed, too, but not so heartily, and the great time began.

Sally went for the cake-box, and Tibbie made a thoughtful selection; and "Who'll ever find a few crumbs?" said Sally. "Come along!"

The great child and the little, full of a

sense of play, went up the stairs hand in hand. Tibbie could scarcely take account of what was happening to her, such was the pure delight of the adventure.

"This is the dining-room; this is the sitting-room; this is the receiving-room; this, now prepare — this is Mrs. Darling's own room!"

Up went the light; the rose-paper walls, the rose-chintz dumpy chairs, the silver-laden dressing-table, the pink and white draped bed, leaped into sight. Tibbie stood still, open-lipped.

"Ain't it handsome?" asked Sally, with the pride of indirectly belonging to such things. "Come along, I'm going to wash your hands in Mrs. Darling's basin."

She drew Tibbie, who gazed backward over her shoulder, into the little alcove where the marble wash-stand was, and turned on stiff jets of hot and cold water together. At the sweet odor of the soap tablet pushed under her nose, Tibbie's attention was won to the operations of washing and wiping.

"But where is there a hundred of any-

thing?" she asked, faintly, looking all about.

"Oh, this ain't it yet! This is only like the outside entry. Now, Miss Tibbs, what kind of scent will you have on your hands?"

"Oh, Sal!"

"Shall it be Violet, or Russian Empress, or—what's this other—Lilass Blank? or the anatomizer played over them like the garden-hose?"

They unstopped the bottles in turn, and drew up out of them great, noisy, luxurious breaths. "This, Sally, this," said Tibbie at the one with the double name like a person. Sally poured a drop in her little rough, red hands, and she danced as she rubbed them together.

"Why are the little scissors crooked?" she asked, busily picking up and putting down things one after the other. "What for is the fluting-irons? What for is the butter in the little chiny jar? What's the flour for in the silver box? Oh, what's this? Oh, Sal, what's that?"

Sally picked up the powder-puff and gave

her little friend, who drew back startled and coughing, a dusty dab with it on each cheek. "It's to make you pale," she said. "It ain't fashionable to be red." She applied the puff to her own cheeks as well. The two stood gazing in silent interest at themselves in the mirror, and gradually broke into smiles at the incongruous reflection. Sally suddenly bent one cheek, hitched up one shoulder, and brushed half her face clean; then did the same by the other cheek with her other shoulder. Tibbie, who had watched her, aped her movement faithfully. They looked at themselves again, and Tibbie remarked, "But I ain't red, anyhow."

"Law! that you ain't! When are you going to begin to get some fat on your bones, Tibbie, or to grow?"

"I don't know. Who's the gentleman, Sal, in the pretty frame?"

"That's Mrs.'s husband. He ain't been living some time."

"Oh, he isn't living. Listen, listen, Sally! What's that noise I keep hearing? I've heard it ever since we came."

Sally listened. "That? That's Jetty. It's a little bit of a dog, up at the top of the house."

"Oh, a little bit of a dog! Why does he bark all the time?"

"I guess Mrs. Bonnet shut him up there alone in the dark till she came back from gadding with Miss Pittock."

"Couldn't we get him, Sally? I hate to hear him. I want to see him awfully."

"All right. You wait here. But don't you hurt anything, or I'll skin you, sure, like I told Miss Catherine. And whatever you do, don't you go into the little room till I come back."

"Is the hundred there?"

"Yes, it's there."

Tibbie, left alone, looked at the half-open door a minute, then turned away from it: all was so interesting, anyhow, she could wait with grace. With the palm of her hand, which she frequently stopped to smell, she stroked the fine linen pillows on the bed, and the white bear rugs on the floor, and the curtains: everything felt so soft. She ex-

amined the features of the Rev. Dorel Goodhue with approbation, proposing to ask Sally whether she knew him.

The bark came nearer and nearer; when the door opened, in tumbled a small silky ball of black dog, who almost turned himself inside out in his delight at being in human company again. He ran floppily about and about the floor, in his conscious, cringing, graceful way, waving his tail round and round, tossing back his long silk ears to bark and bark.

At last the girls between them had him caught. He was squeezed tight in Tibbie's arms, where he wriggled and twitched, covering her cheeks and ears with rapid dog-kisses, interspersed still with rapturous barks. "Oh, oh!" cried Tibbie, trying vainly to hold him still long enough to get a good kiss at him. "Isn't he soft? Isn't he sweet? And he has a yellow ribbon. Oh, do keep quiet, doggie dear — you tickle!"

"I don't think we will bother any more about seeing the hundred," said Sally, a

feigned coldness in her tone, and stood aloof watching child and dog.

"I had forgotten, honest, Sally."

"Put him down and come on, then."

"Mayn't I hold him and come too?"

"No; for when you see 'em, you'll drop him so quick you'll like as not break his legs."

"All right. Down, Jetty! Down, sir! Come along, Jetty; come right along, dear!"

"Wait a minute. I'll go in first and turn up the light. When I sing out, you come on."

She went ahead, and Jetty precipitated himself at her heels. Tibbie stooped with anxious inducing noises, and "Come back, sir! Come back!"

"Ready!" shouted Sally.

Tibbie made a bound for the door, but at a step's distance was overcome by a curious timidity, and instead of bolting in, pulled the door towards her tremulously, and pushed aside the lace hanging with a cold hand.

There lay the hundred, all on a couch under the gas-light, arranged as in a show-

window, propped by means of silk cushions so as to form a solid sloping bank — the hundred beautiful dolls.

"Well, ma'am?" asked Sally, expectantly.

Tibbie said nothing, but looked at them vaguely, full of constraint.

"Well, I never!" said Sally. "Don't you like 'em? What on earth did you expect, child? Well, I never! Well, if it don't beat all! Why, when I was a young one— Why, Tibbie girl — don't you think they are *lovely?*"

"Yes," she whispered, moving her head slowly up and down, then letting it hang.

"Aw, come out of that," said Sally, understanding. "Come, let's look at 'em one by one, taking all our time. Come to Sally, darling, and don't feel bad. We'll have lots of fun."

She took the not unwilling Tibbie by the hand, and led her nearer the banked splendor.

The dolls were all of a size, and, undressed, would with difficulty have been told apart, except, perhaps, by their little mothers. All

were very blond and wide-eyed and bow-lipped; all, though dressed like little ladies, had the chubby hands of infants; and their boots were painted trimly on with black, and their garters with blue. But how to render the coquettish fashionableness with which these wax-complexioned darlings were tricked out! all equally in silks and satins and velvets and lace, so that there could be no jealousies; all with hats of like beauty and stylishness.

Sally seated herself on the floor beside the low couch, and pulled Tibbie down into her lap, who drew up Jetty into hers. Tibbie had recovered the power to speak, but was still unduly sober and husky.

"I had almost guessed it, you know," she said, "when you said like angels with hats on. But I couldn't think there would be a hundred unless it was a store. What has the lady so many for?"

"Bless your heart! They ain't for herself! They are for orphans in a school that a minister-cousin of hers is superintendent of. She has been over a month making

these clothes. Every Wednesday she would give a tea party, and a lot of ladies come and sit stitching and snipping and buzzing over the dolls' clothes the blessed afternoon. And I washed the tea things after them all!"

"They are for the orphans. Are there a hundred orphans?"

"I guess likely."

"Suppose, Sally—suppose there were only ninety-nine, and some girl got two!"

"Well, we two have got a hundred for to-night, Tibbie, so let's play, and glad enough we've got our mothers. Look, this is the way you must hold them to be sure of not crumpling anything."

She slipped her hand deftly under a doll's petticoats, and they peeped discreetly at the dainty under-clothes, crisp and snowy, more lace than linen.

"My soul and body! Did you ever see the like!" exclaimed Sally, spurring on Tibbie's enthusiasm by the tone of her voice, making the wonder more, to fill her little friend's soul to intoxication. Tibbie easily

responded. She fairly rocked herself to and fro with delight.

"And not a pin among 'em," sighed Sally. "All pearl buttons and silk tying-strings and silver hooks and eyes; and, mercy on my soul! a little bit of a pocket in every dress, with its little bit of a lace pocket-handkerchief inside. D'you see that, Tibbie? And not two alike!"

"Oh, but there are some *'most* alike!" said the quick-eyed Tibbie; "only, scattered far apart. There are three with the little rosebud silk, and here's more than one with the speckled muslin. Perhaps those will be given to sisters."

"Come on, Tibbie; let's choose the one we would choose to get, if we was to get one given us. Now, I would like that one in red velvet. It's just so dressy, ain't it, with the gold braid sewed down in a pattern round the bottom. Which would you take?"

"I should like the one all in white. She must be a bride; see, she has a wreath and veil and necklace. I should like her the

very best. But right after that, if I could have two, I should like this other in the shade-hat with the forget-me-nots, and forget-me-nots dotted all over her dress. And, see! the sky-blue hair-ribbon. If I could just have three of them, then I would take this one too, with the black lace shawl over her head fastened with roses instead of a hat. She has such a lovely face! And after her I would choose this one in green—or this one in pink; no, this one here, Sally, just look—this one in green and pink. And you, if you could have more than one, which would you choose, after the red one?"

"Well, I guess I'd choose this one in white."

"Oh no, Sally; don't you remember? That is the bride, the one I said the very first. You can have all the others, Sally dear, except the bride. But let's see, perhaps there are two brides. Yes!—no!—that is just a little girl in white, without a wreath. Should you like her as well? I was the first to say the bride, you know."

"Law! I wouldn't have wanted her if I

had known she was a bride! I take this one, Tibbie — this one with the feathers in her hat. Ain't she the gay girl, in red and green plaid! And this purple silk one, and this red and white stripe, and this—"

"Wait! That's enough, Sally; that makes four for you. It's my turn now. If I could have five, I should take one of the rose-bud ones — no, two of them, so's to play I had twins. Say, Sally, let's choose one apiece— first you one, then me one, till we've chosen them all up, and got fifty apiece. Your turn."

They chose and chose, pointing each time, and detailing the costume of the chosen one aloud with the greatest enjoyment.

Jetty had laid himself down beside them, stretched his silky length, his nose between his paws. He was very tired. Perhaps among the things his great moist eyes were wondering about was the reason of this fatigue in his vocal chords.

"For my forty-fifth one," said Sally, placing her forefinger pensively against the side of her nose, "I choose her—her with the little black velvets run all through."

"Taken already," said Tibbie, promptly.

"Then her over there, with the short puffy sleeves."

"Taken!"

"She taken too? Well, then, her in the pink Mother Hubbard with the little knitting-bag on her arm."

"Taken, Sally! Can't you remember anything? Those belong to me; I chose them long ago. These are the only not taken ones; here and here and here and here and here and here and—"

"Aw, you're a great girl!" cried Sally, suddenly throwing her arms around Tibbie and casting herself backward on the floor with her, where they tumbled and rolled, laughing, Jetty jumping about on top of them, barking hoarsely in a frenzy of fun.

"Oh, Tibbie, ain't we having a time of it?"

And Tibbie almost shouted, "Yes!—ain't we having a time of it!"

"Ain't this a night?"

"Oh yes!—ain't it a night!"

Sally tickled and poked her affectionately; and she tried to tickle Sally, and laughed till

she was almost hysterical, and never remembered who she was, or thought of anything outside this little room, but was filled with a sense of the crazy deliciousness of the moment.

At last, weak with laughter, she disentangled herself from the still panting and laughing Sally on the floor, and insisted on returning to the business of the distribution. She felt in the mood to be very funny. She jerked herself up and down and all about in a senseless sort of way.

"Here, Sally, now stop laughing and let's finish. It was your turn. You'd best take that one; she looks more as if she might be a little girl of yours, her cheeks are so red—red as a great big cabbage!" This remark seemed to Tibbie so inexpressibly humorous that she laughed again till she nearly cried.

"Well, it's sure none of 'em has legs to make 'em look like children of yours," retorted Sally; and that seemed a greater joke still. With a foal's action, Tibbie flung out the thin black legs with the awkward boots at the ends of them, and dropped to the

floor squirming and laughing. Sally caught her suddenly again, and cast herself backward with her as before, in a gale of mirth.

There they were frolicking, when the peal of a bell rang brightly across their giggles.

Sally sat up instantly, and all in Mrs. Darling's house was for a long moment still as the very grave, for Sally had instinctively clapped her hand over Jetty's ready muzzle.

"Murder!" whispered Sally, solemnly, at last.

"What is it?" breathed Tibbie in her ear.

"Was it the front door or the back door?" asked Sally.

"I dun'no', Sally."

Sally had picked herself up, and was stroking down her things.

Tibbie stood beside her, looking up in her face, her own a trifle pale.

Sally's irresolution lasted only a second. She cast an eye on the dolls, saw that they were very nearly as she had found them, and turned down the light. She looked about Mrs. Darling's room to see that all

was as usual, and turned down the lights there too, after glancing at the clock.

"It ain't late," she murmured. "It ain't a bit later than I supposed. It can't be her! It might be Mrs. Bonnet, though, getting home before Catherine, who's got the key. I shouldn't want her to catch you here for the whole world. Look here, Tibbie. You stand in here till I find out who it is, and if it's Mrs. Bonnet, you'll have to stay hidden till I find a good chance to come and smuggle you down."

Tibbie waited in the farthest corner of the hall closet, holding her breath, conscious of nothing at first but excitement and fear of she did not know quite what. After a little, the thought drifted across her fervent hope for present safety, that though she got well out of this scrape, she would probably never see those radiant dollies again, her own half or Sally's.

She heard a whiffling and scratching at the closet door. Here was Jetty, dear Jetty, whose actions would surely betray her to Mrs. Bonnet when she came that way. Tib-

bie whispered: "Go right away, Jetty. There's no one in this closet; go right away!" and pressed backward to the wall, among the water-proofs, feeling like a little criminal with the police on her track.

"Tibbie!" came Sally's voice from the foot of the stairs: it sounded perfectly calm, and pleasant with a sort of company pleasantness. "It's all right. It's just a friend dropped in for a moment. You can go in again and play a little longer. Turn up the light carefully. But remember what I told you."

Tibbie instantly forgot all her fears. She came out and picked up Jetty; she kissed him, explaining why she had told him to go away. The doggie seemed to bear no malice.

Tibbie tiptoed into the doll-room, and established herself on her knees before the dolls, happier than before, with a profounder happiness, in a stiller, almost devotional mood. It was so different being alone with them, having them quite to herself, to play with in her own way. She took up the

bride with a reverent hand, and after long contemplating her, very seriously, tenderly kissed her. Then, touching them as if they had been snow-flakes almost, she moved the impressive little persons about, until her fifty were on one side and Sally's on the other.

"I can't play they're a family," she reflected; "they are too many all the same age, and all girls. I will play they are a hundred girls in an orphan asylum—a very rich orphan asylum—and that I am the superintendent. To-morrow I am going to give each a beautiful doll for a Christmas present. This little girl's name is Rosa. That one is Nelly. That one is Katy. That one is Sue." She named every one, passing through the list of such names as Goldenlocks, Cherrylips, Diamondeyes, to end with such invented ones as Kirry, Mirry, Dirry, Birry. They seemed so much completer with names. Tibbie would say, "Miss Snowdrop!" And Miss Snowdrop, with Tibbie's assistance, would rise, answering, "Yes, ma'am." "Spell knot." "N—O—T!" "Not at all,

my dear. Sit down again, my dear. Miss Lily; stand up, miss, and see if you can do any better this morning."

Suddenly, after having taken the asylum through a day's exercises, Tibbie tired of being the superintendent. She craved a relation more intimate, more affectionate, with the dollies. She did not believe a superintendent would have kissed and fondled them as she longed to do. She selected a dozen or so, to play they were her children. She gave them their supper; she washed them and made them say their prayers. She told them it was bedtime, and she would now rock them to sleep. She turned down the light, to make all very real, and drawing out a low rocking-chair that seemed made for her purpose, seated herself in it with two dolls on each arm, the rest made as comfortable as possible on her lap; for not one of them, after being included in the family, could, of course, be left out of the rocking. She rocked gently, now hushing, now singing "Bye-low-low-baby," her maternal heart swollen very large. In time, one of

the daughters became fractious and restless; she had to have medicine, and the rocking for her sake had to become almost violent. Nothing would soothe her but that the chair should rock backward and forward to the very tip ends of its rockers. This had its good effect at last; all the dolls were fast asleep, and the mother, her duty done, composed herself to take a well-earned rest too. This thought was no doubt suggested to Tibbie by the fact that she was really getting sleepy. It was long past her bedtime.

She was not far from napping when she became aware of Sally saying: "Lively, Tibbie! Miss Catherine has got back. We must be packing off home. I declare I lost sight of the time. There's just no one like a fireman to be entertaining, I declare. Mrs. Bonnet won't be long coming now."

She turned up the light, and saw the dolls so disarranged.

Tibbie was rubbing her eyes.

"Law!" said Sally, a little blankly. "Do you suppose we can get them to look as they did? I hope t' Heaven she didn't know

which went next to which. Do you remember, Tibbie, where each belonged?"

"Yes. The bride went here. The rosebuds here. The purple and gray here. I can put them all back, every one."

"Oh, we're all right!" said Sally, cheerfully again. "No one 'll ever know in the world they've been disturbed."

She had drawn off to get the general effect, and compare it with the earlier image in her brain, when she made a dive for one of the dolls, the last one, that the sleepy Tibbie had handed her up off the floor.

"Tibbie!" she said, in a ghastly whisper, "look at its head!"

Something had happened to it, certainly. Its pink-and-white face was pushed in; it looked very much as if a chair-rocker had gone over it. Tibbie looked at it, not understanding at all.

"Oh, Tibbie!" groaned Sally, "now what 'll we do!"

"I didn't do it," said Tibbie, lifting a pale face with perfectly truthful eyes. "I was just as careful! She was one of my daugh-

ters; I had her in my lap rocking her to sleep with the others; she must have slipped off my lap — there were too many for one lap, I guess — but I didn't step on her. Sure, Sally—sure as I live, I didn't step on her!"

"Oh, law! You must have rocked on her. Oh, Tibbie, what 'll I do!"

She picked up the doll to examine it, but saw at once that the little face could not be made right again.

Tibbie watched her without a word; her voice seemed to have sunk far below reach.

Sally moved the dolls about tentatively, so that ninety-nine should cover the same space as a hundred. Certainly at first glance the one she held would never be missed. "But what's the good?" she said, throwing it down. "They'll count them, and there'll be the mischief of a fuss. Oh, Tibbie"—and she had reached the end of her good-nature—"why did I ever think of bringing you here? Now look at all the trouble you've brought on me, when I thought you'd be so careful! And I told you and

told you till I was hoarse. And here you've ruined all!"

Tibbie's eyes could not bear to meet Sally's. She stood with her hands behind her, speechless and motionless, in the middle of the floor.

"I declare I don't know what to do!" Sally exclaimed, dropping her arms and sitting down before the wreck. "I wish I'd never seen 'em! I wish there'd never been any Christmas! Oh, it's a great job, this! Tibbie, you've done for me this time!"

At this moment Miss Catherine came in to hurry them.

"She's broken one of them!" blurted out Sally.

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes, she has!"

"Let me see it. Oh, you wicked child! She's smashed its face right in! Now who ever heard of such naughtiness?"

Tibbie twisted about ever so little, to get her back turned towards the two.

"She didn't do it out of naughtiness at all, Miss Catherine. She's as good a child as

ever lived!" At that Tibbie's shoulders gave a little convulsive heave. "It was an accident entirely. But that's just as bad for me. I suppose I shall have to say it was me did it."

"And then they'll say what was I doing while the kitchen help was poking about in the Mrs.'s chamber. No; you don't get me into trouble, Sally Bean! You'd much better say how it was—how that you asked me if you just might bring a little girl to look, and I said you might, out of pure goodnature, being Christmas is rightly for children, and I've a softness for them. And while we was both in the kitchen, she slipped away from us and came here and done it before we knew. And the child herself will say that it was so. You'll be packed off dead sure out of this place if you let on you meddled with them yourself. She won't have her things meddled with— There goes the bell. There comes that old cat Bonnet."

She hurried off to open.

"What's the matter?" said Mrs. Bonnet,

elevating her eyebrows as she appeared at the door and looked into the room she had expected to find dark and still. She held a paper bag; she spoke with an impediment and a breath of peppermint. Her cheek-bones and the end of her nose were brilliant pink with the cold. "What child is that?"

Miss Catherine was behind Mrs. Bonnet. "It happened this way, Mrs. Bonnet," she began, and told the story with a little tactful adaptation to the intelligence of her audience, ending, "And now, Mrs. Bonnet, what's to be done?"

"Oh, you wicked little brat!" said Mrs. Bonnet. "I just want to get hold of you and shake you!"

She made a snatch at Tibbie, who instinctively got beyond her clutch, and turning scared eyes towards Sally, said, just audibly, "I want to go home; I want to go home."

"It don't seem possible," said Mrs. Bonnet, bitterly, "that I can't run out a minute just to do an errand for Mrs. Darling herself—to get a spool of feather-stitching silk

—but things like this has to happen. Catherine, I thought you, at least, was a responsible person, and here you has to go and—"

"Mrs. Bonnet," Catherine interrupted, "you just let that alone! Don't you try none of that with me! I went out of an errand every bit as much as you did. I went out to make sure the ice-cream would be sent in good season for Christmas dinner, I did. Now I don't get dragged into this mess one bit more than you do!"

Mrs. Bonnet looked at her with a poison-green eye. She seemed to be repressing what was a trifle difficult to keep the upper hand of.

"Well," she exclaimed at last, "Mrs. Darling will be here in a minute, and then we shall all see what we shall see. Lord, ain't that woman been cross to-day, and fussy! 'Tain't as if she was like other people—a little bit sensible, and could take some little few things into consideration, and remember we are all human flesh and blood. Not much! She don't consider nothing, nor nobody, nor feelings, nor circumstances! She

just makes things fly! Things has to go her way, every time!"

"I want to go home," cried Tibbie, pathetically, and looked towards Sally now with a trembling face.

"No, you sha'n't go home," said Bonnet, uglily. "You shall stay right here and take the blame you deserve, after spoiling the face of that handsome doll. What do you mean by it, you little brat, you little gutter imp?"

"You let her alone, Mrs. Bonnet," said Sally, with a boldness that had never before characterized her relations with that lady. "Don't you talk to her like that! Any one can see she's as sorry as sorry can be for what she's done, and all the trouble she's got us into—"

"And what does that help, I'd like to know? The doll is broke, ain't it? And some one of us is going to catch it, however things go. You're a lucky girl, I say, if you don't lose your place. Some one of us is going to, I can easy foretell."

"I ain't going to lose my place," said Miss

Catherine, firmly; and with a lifted chin was leaving to lay off her things, when the cook's nice copper-saucepan face was pushed a little inside the door.

"What's the matter?" she asked, cheerily, and stepped in. Her high-colored shawl was pinned on her breast with a big brooch; her bonnet-strings were nearly lost in her fat chin. "What's it all about? Whose nice little girl is this?"

Gradually she got the whole story, and going straight to Tibbie lifted her miserable little face, saying: "Don't you feel bad one bit, darlin'! It was all an accident, and it's no good crying over spilt milk. And if Mrs. Darling gets mad at you, she ain't the real lady I take her for. Why, I gave my Clary a new doll to-night, and it's ready for a new head this minute. And did I stop to rear and tear about it? Not a bit of it. Why, bless you, she didn't go for to do it! What child smashes a doll a purpose? You're a pretty set, the whole gang of you, to pitch into a mite like this!"

Tibbie by this time was freely weeping,

and Sally and the cook together were trying to comfort and silence her.

"I've a great mind to stay here myself and stand up for her, yer pack of old maids, the lot of yer!" said the cook, looking hard at Mrs. Bonnet, who had reappeared without her hat and coat.

"You will oblige me, Mrs. MacGrath, by doing nothing of the sort," said Mrs. Bonnet. "We've no need to have a whole scene from the drama. You've no business on this floor anyhow, and I must insist on your keeping yourself in your own quarters."

"And I'll take my own time, yer born Britisher," said Mrs. MacGrath. Then putting her arm around Tibbie: "Well, Tibbie dear, you can be sure of this: however bad this seems, it 'll soon be over. And if Mrs. Darling does scold, it 'll soon be over too. It 'll all be looking different to you in the morning. However things goes, you'll soon be forgetting all about it. And tomorrow is Christmas Day, that our own dear Lord was born on, and I'll bake you a little cake and send it to you by Sally."

"But Sally's going to be sent away," sobbed Tibbie.

"So she might be, but I feel it in my little toe that she ain't going to be."

"Well, and if I am, I am, and there an end," said Sally, bravely. "But I don't see why she can't take the price of the doll out of my wages and let me stay."

"I think you'll find," said Mrs. Bonnet, "that it ain't most particularly the cost of the doll gets you into trouble— There she comes this minute!"

The door-bell had rung. Profound silence reigned above, while all listened. Tibbie stopped crying.

"Good-night," came Mrs. Darling's sweet voice, presently, floating up from the foot of the stairs.

"Good-night," came the Rev. Dorel Goodhue's.

There was a rustle of silken skirts.

"Oh, Cousin Cynthia!"

"Yes?"

"At ten, did you say—or half past?"

"I said ten—*or* half past. Good-night."

More rustling of skirts; then,

"Oh, Cousin Dorel—"

"Yes?" from the foot of the stairs.

"It doesn't matter—what we spoke about, you know, unless perfectly convenient."

"Oh, but it will be convenient, perfectly. Good-night. Sleep well."

"You too. Pleasant dreams. Good-night."

"Good-night."

The rustling drew nearer, and Mrs. Darling stood in the doorway, looking with a sort of absent-minded astonishment at the assemblage in her room.

The violets were quite dead on her white bosom; her hair was beginning to come loose, and stood out in golden wisps about her flushed face. She looked very sweet and soft and shiny-eyed and pleasant altogether.

"What is it?" she asked; and as Jetty was evoluting and clamoring about her feet she picked him up and kissed him like a mother. "Has anything happened? What is everybody doing up here? Whose little

girl is this sitting up so late? They used to tell me I should never grow, my dear, if I sat up so late—"

"This is what it is, ma'am," began Mrs. Bonnet; and she told her arrangement of the story, uttering her words as a mowing-machine cuts weeds.

Mrs. Darling abstractedly took the rocking-chair; as she listened, the pleasant, happy look forsook her face.

"Oh, cut it short!" she interrupted, sharply. "What you have to tell is that the child there has broken one of the dolls, isn't it?"

There was an assenting mutter from Mrs. Bonnet.

"And you've kept her here, when she ought to have been in bed these hours, to bear the first beauty of my displeasure—"

Mrs. Darling had said so much in a hard voice, with an appearance of cold anger; here her voice suddenly died, and she burst out crying like a vexed, injured child. "I *declare* it is too bad!" she sobbed, quite reckless of making a spectacle of herself,

while all looked on and listened in consternation—"I declare it is too bad! It's no use! It doesn't matter *what* I do—it is always the same! It is *always* taken for granted I will conduct myself like a beast. Who can wonder, after that, if I do? Here I find them, pale as sheets, the five of them, shaking in their boots because a forlorn little child has broken a miserable doll. And *what* is it supposed I shall do about it? Didn't I dress the hundred of them for children, and little poor children too? And I must have known they would get broken, of course. *Why* did I dress them? *What* did I spend months dressing them for? Solely for *show*, they think—not for any charity, any kindness, any love of children, or anything in the *world* but to make an effect on an occasion, I suppose—to make myself a merit with the parson, perhaps!" Here her crying seemed to become less of anger and nervousness, and more of sorrow; one would have thought her heart-broken. "Oh, it is too bad! One would imagine I never said a decent thing, or did a kind act, to any one. And Heaven

knows it is not for lack of trying to change. But no one sees the difference! I am treated like a vixen and a terror. All the people about me hate and fear and deceive me! A proof of it to-night! Oh, the *lesson!* Oh, I wasn't *meant* for this! I wasn't meant for it! When I remember last Sunday's sermon, and how straight to my heart it went —oh, I am a fool to cry! Come here to me, dear child. What is your name? What? A little louder! What did you say? Tibbie! Oh, what a nice, funny name!" Mrs. Darling smiled through her tears, pathetically hiccoughing and sighing while she spoke. "*You* didn't think I was going to scold you, did you, dear? Of *course* not! It was an accident; I understand all about it. I used to break my dolls' heads frequently, I remember very well—"

Mrs. Darling had put her arm endearingly around Tibbie, and tried to make the child's head easy on her shoulder. But poor Tibbie's muscles could not relax; her stiff little face rested uncomfortably, without pressing, upon its warm alabaster prop. "Let

us see, dear, now, what we can do to make us both feel happier. I dressed all those dolls for little children I am not acquainted with at all. Which of them should you like the very best? Which should you like for your very own?"

Tibbie could neither make herself move nor speak; but the tail of her eye travelled towards the dolls.

"The bride!" Sally took the liberty of saying, beaming as she came to Tibbie's aid.

"The bride? Which one is that? That one? Of course!" Mrs. Darling reached for the resplendent favorite and placed her in Tibbie's hands. "There, my dear."

Tibbie took the doll loosely, without breath of thanks; but while Mrs. Darling reviewed the dolls, her hand went out involuntarily towards the broken one. Mrs. Darling saw it. "Of course," she said — "of course, you would want that poor dollie to nurse back to health. Now, dear, isn't there *one more* you would like?"

At this Tibbie's confusion seemed likely

to overwhelm and swamp her. "I'll choose one for you," said Mrs. Darling, "and you shall call her Cynthia, after me. How would you like that? Suppose we say this one, with the forget-me-nots? She looks a little like me, doesn't she, with her hair parted in the middle? Her frock is made of a piece of one of my own, and that blue is my favorite color. There, Tibbie, now you have two whole dollies and part of another. You must run right home to bed. A Merry Christmas to you, dear child. I am very happy to have made your acquaintance."

The exuberant Sally talked like a clock gone mad all the way home through the clear wintry night; and since she felt inclined to conversation, it was well she could keep one up alone, for Tibbie, who trotted beside her, holding fast her dolls, did not utter a single word.

THE PASSING OF SPRING

IN the crowded, unbeautiful part of the city were two streets forming as if the two long legs of the A we knew as children, the A with feet wide apart, that stood for Ape. A third street went from one to the other, as the little bar does across the A, but crooked, as a child's hand would draw it. This street was narrow, gloomy, and relatively quiet. The tide of traffic kept to the larger streets; the small street knew, beyond the occupants of its own houses and visitors to these, few but hurried foot-travellers who used it as a short cut, and people of inferior pretensions coming there to trade. The ground-story of almost every house was a shop; a person might have spent a life without real necessity for leaving the street. Here boots were made

and mended; in the next door, clothes were sold (the dim show-windows were full of decent dresses, very good still for what you paid; you could be fitted even with a ball-dress, all beads and satin bows), yonder you could get money on deposit of your watch, or your flute, or your ear-drops; farther you could have yourself shaved. There was a window full of tarts and loaves; another window in which a roast fowl set its gold note, as some would say, between the pink note of half a ham and the coral note of a lobster.

Across a certain one of the windows in that street for a long time had hung from a line, as from the belt of a savage, tails of hair —black, brown, blond. Below these, two featureless wax faces presented their sallow blankness to the passer, one wreathed with yellow curls, the other capped with brown waves of a regular pattern. Ordered around the twin turned-ebony stands were hairpins, sticks of cosmetic wrapped in silver paper, slabs of chalk laid on pink cotton, china pots with pictures of flowers or beauties and pleasing inscriptions in French, fuzzy white balls

of down, combs, gilt-brass ornaments, kid-capped phials containing amber and ruby liquids. On the inside of the heavy shutter, caught back against the street-wall by day, was pasted a large print. This told you in what a prodigious way Madame Finibald's Gold Elixir would make your hair grow, and showed you the picture of a lady who doubtless had used it—her hair was extraordinary, it nearly reached to her feet.

Perhaps it had been found that the neighborhood was become hardened to the sight of the luxuriant pictured hair; perhaps some who had provided themselves with the small copy of it, to be obtained inside on a bottle full of brown stuff, had grown inclined to treat of it lightly: "Ah, Madame Finibald!" perhaps one irritated customer had said to the old proprietress, coming to have made clear to her why after three bottles of Gold Elixir her locks were still not thick, still not glossy and splendid as the announcement promised they should be, "it's easy to cork up herb tea. It's easy to make hair long in a picture, and it's easy to make it thick. I

don't believe there ever was any such person as that young woman on the label!" One morning saw a change in Madame Finibald's window. All the accustomed things were crowded to the sides to make room for a chair; on this sat a girl with brown-gold hair that reached in very truth to the floor.

On every morning and every afternoon, through a long winter, first one end and then the other of the little street was crossed by a youth who kept to the larger thoroughfares with the stream. He carried books; he went rapidly, granting small attention to the things he passed. It is not from that to be supposed that he was profoundly thinking. His face, agreeable in feature and color, was rather wanting in expression; no more interesting than it was interested. He passed at precisely the same hour every morning, and the time of his passing in the afternoon varied but little. This, from October unto April. But when April set its gold stamp on the weather, had there been any wise person observing this well-constructed blond machine, applauding its regularity, holding

it up perhaps as an example to other young frequenters of schools and lecture-rooms—that wise person would have been troubled, he would have had misgivings, he would have been at last full of grief.

A change had come over the young man's mood. His eye was acquiring a roving habit. If his step had before been bent on duty, it was now less directly bent; if before he had been on time at his appointments, he must now have been always more or less late. He walked leisurely, swinging his books by a strap. He loitered before shop-windows, he turned to look after a face. The sky smiled down between the rows of buildings on the occasion of the first balmy day; little clouds floated in it, shimmering like dissolving pearls. He returned the soft sky's compliment; he looked up at it, the winter sternness melting from his eyes. At every street corner he was seen to stop, foolishly smiling upward; and, yes, positively, he was seen there, forgetful of all the people, to sigh and stretch! On that very day he lost three books out of his strap, and did not for some

time notice it; when he did, he cared nothing! From a scrawl on the fly-leaf the finder of these books learned their rightful owner to be of the house of Fraisier.

He had come hundreds of miles from an obscure town to study in this great city; he had been a serious, mechanical plodder for months, feeling that he owed it to himself and to his distant family to fill his head full, full with precious notions. He had formed no friendships with his fellow-students, fearing that they would divert him, or perhaps, fearing the young fellows themselves, among whom he felt singularly green. He lived alone in one little room at the end of the world, took no holidays, had no fun, went to bed early so as to be fresh for his book in the morning. And now, suddenly, he had completely lost the point of view from which it had seemed necessary that he should get dizzily high marks, that he should conquer field after field in the realm of learning, and return to his home exuding glory. He could not persuade himself any more but that it befitted him perfectly to spend many hours

strolling through the streets with his hands in his pockets, amusing his eyes with sights of every sort. He could find no argument that satisfied him why he should not lounge on a garden seat warm with sun, smoking cigarettes half the day, thinking nothing profitable. The wretched boy had lost all sober sense of the duty of man.

If he had limited himself to sitting idle in the garden, watching the year develop in that narrow, charming enclosure, one might have found an excuse for him, the same as for the scientist who studies a specimen under a glass; or, one might have said he had been overworking, his new circumstances on coming to the city had induced in him a false sort of fervor for work—a reaction was to be expected. But the mood whose first stage had been simple disinclination for study and a taste for pointless wanderings, by the time that in the march of the year the crocuses had gone, took on developments. It was not so often before a many-colored flower-bed he stopped, as before a window full of hats and bonnets.

If, again, he had limited himself to staring in at milliners' fronts! The wares there do somewhat resemble fantastic flowers, and might explain the interest of a botanist. But he halted in the same way before shops that offered no excuse for the same attention; windows in which were only idle feminine frocks displayed, flippant fans, frills of fluted lace, feathery things for the neck.

One might have imagined from his wonder and interest that all these things had just been invented, that they were a strange spring-crop; that new, too, was the race of smiling, chatting, shopping beings crowding the street on sunny days, new and in fashion only since this spring, such unaccustomed pleasure spoke in his eye that shyly followed them in their prettiest representatives. What exquisite sense shown, O ever-young Creator, in making the lip red, and the neck white, and the temperate cheek between white and red!

The boy had moments of being drunk in a glorified way even as is the innocent bee, with nothing but wandering among flowers.

Owing to a confusion in the ideas attendant on that mysterious soft travailing among the atoms of the heart warmed through by spring, all sorts of things to him were as flowers! His imagination was so increased in power, that with nothing but a pair of little shoes in a show-case to start from he could build up the most astonishing, dreamy stories: he could set feet in the shoes and rear a palatial flesh-and-blood structure over them, as easy as sigh; fit the whole with graces, laces, circumstances and adventures—contrive even to tangle its fate pleasingly with his own.

Which may make supposed that he was a youth of some boldness. Far from it. He scarcely knew what a woman's eyes were like, except in profile or fugitive three-quarters; on the other hand, he was well acquainted with her back hair. Hair, in which he could pursue long studies unconfounded, seemed to him the most beautiful thing in all the world.

One day, with a view to lengthening the way by taking a road that though shorter must from novelty be richer in diversion than

his daily track, he turned into the little street that cut off the triangle of the A. He paused before the window of the worn watches and sleeve-links; he took his time over the faded finery of the second-hand clothes shop; he examined certain yellowed wood-cuts and stained books he found in a narrow open stall. As he seemed coming to the end of the street's resources, he looked over the way and thoughtfully felt his cheek: he could not find there what would have justified a refreshing station at the barber's. He continued his way slowly, to make it last. Now, he stopped where several others were likewise stopping — he had come to Madame Finibald's.

The girl sat amid her hair, either unconscious or disdainful of the eyes watching her beyond the glass. She looked in a book open on her lap; now and then she turned over a leaf, sometimes revealing a picture on the page. Her chair was low, perhaps so that her hair should amply trail; its lowness made an excuse for the listlessness of her posture; her feet were outstretched and

crossed, the passers might know that one of her shoes was laced with pink twine. If she moved her eyes from her book a moment, it was only to sweep them past the faces, unseeing, and lift them to the strip of sky between the houses—so blue this day, the little bit there was of it.

Her face one scarcely noticed for the first moment more than any rosy apple; for oh! her hair!—her hair claimed all the attention a man had to give, did her shining hair falling stately along her cheeks, all over her shoulders, below her waist, beyond her garment—richer, of course, than any possible queen's cloak. The light rippled over it, changing on it all the time, when nothing else in the window appeared to live.

Within the shadow of the shop was discerned a watchful, wrinkled old face, chiefly differing from a parrot's in the slyness of its eyes. Fraisier catching sight of it thought of a witch on guard over a princess enchanted and imprisoned in a glass-case.

The little group in front of Madame Finibald's dispersed, formed anew with other

faces many times in the hour; Fraisier remained, his eyes climbing up, sliding down the golden ropes of hair.

At last, though the girl gave no sign, he was made uncomfortable by the sense that she must, even without looking, have seen how long he stood. He inquired timidly of her face. It was informed with a gentle brazenness, fortified to be stared at all the day. Yet there was a suggestion of childishness in its abstracted expression; she wore the sort of look one has seen on the face of a little girl playing at being somebody else far more splendid than herself. A close observer might have suspected that she really thought it rather grand to sit there in the gorgeousness of her hair, and was amused with pretending not to know that a soul looked on.

Fraisier, because her eyes were lowered, found hardihood to stare his fill at her face. He surrendered without struggle before the round cheeks, the short little nose, the good-natured mouth and chin, which, in truth, took more than their just space in the face. But

most — oh, still most! delighted him the brown-gold hair that tumbled over her forehead and ears in little curls.

He was realizing from the mutterings of what was left him of a conscience how late it must be getting—he must be taking himself off; he was making long the one minute more he allowed himself, when her pupils slid between the lashes in his direction. He had lost all presence of mind, he could not withdraw his glance. After a second's pause upon his, her eyes slid back to her book and were hidden. Then, without another thought towards duty, he crossed the street to the barber's, from whose window he could see Madame Finibald's; and, coming forth with a smoother face than the rose, entered the little eating-shop next door, from which likewise he could command Madame Finibald's.

He went through the little street every day. He took many atrocious meals in the shop, on the table nearest the window.

On such days as brought perfect weather, the girl in Madame Finibald's would turn very often to the sky a look easily inter-

preted as longing. Then would Fraisier look up too and sigh. It seemed such a pity, this wasted blue weather.

It seemed such a pity, all this wasted sweetness, he thought in crossing a public garden on his occasional unwilling way to a lecture. The quince-tree blossomed in red; under the cherry were little drifts of scented snow; up out of the vigorous, rested earth were flowers springing in mad, gay multitudes. The air was silver made air in the morning; and in the afternoon it was gold made air. Birds, busily building, busily twittered. These things did nothing to him, but the more they were lovely and penetrated the heart, the more to make him lonesome.

He took himself away from their radiance without one regret for them, to spend his time in preference in an ugly little street where one could scarcely have known what season it was, where there was nothing to see that was beautiful but certain long, long hair. In thought, though, let it be said in vindication of spring's power of enthralling, having done up the hair in braids, and extinguished

it with a hat, he was always, always guiding it to the contemned garden. When once it was in the garden, May there had become perfect.

He wondered whether it could be she had become aware of his persistent presence. He feared she had, and as often that she had not. He imagined sometimes that when he looked her face was quivering with a conquered desire to smile. That disconcerted him a shade. Sometimes he thought she looked suspiciously rosy for a girl unconscious of all the world. Sometimes he looked away, with the idea that if he turned suddenly he should find her stealing a glance at him. But he dared not look very quickly, lest the action should be too marked; and turning with discreet alacrity, he could never feel sure.

One day, at last, having settled in his mind that this tame conduct was unworthy of a man, refusing himself a second in which to think better of any matter, he crossed the street and charged the shop. A bell snapped sharply as he opened the door. It startled him to the point of gasping. He grew

crimson, finding himself opposed in truth, as many a night before in dream, by Madame Finibald's sly and lowly smile, breathing the same faintly drug-perfumed air as the princess breathed, no glass screen between himself and the hair. He could have touched it, had he been so bold.

He stammered a request for soap—scented soap. He wished himself tens of ten miles away, or time out of mind dead, when—wonderful! The maiden in the window looked frankly over her shoulder. Was it that her eyes brimmed with friendly laughter, or did it seem so to him because his head had become incapable of a true notion? His heart, so to speak, found its feet; he made a muddle of every sentence he launched upon, but his words had a voice behind them. So much he contrived to convey: he was very hard to please in the matter of soap. He sniffed at a variety of proffered tablets, whose virtues Madame Finibald, in very truth like a witch with a philter to sell, assiduously set forth; each cake he examined seemed to hold in her estimation just a little higher

place than the foregoing. At the end of ten minutes, without positively losing her good-humor, she declared that he had seen all in the shop, she was sorry and surprised they could not suit him, they might have a fresh stock in on the morrow. He was leaving in clumsy embarrassment, empty handed, with a promise to return, when the princess lightly jumped from the window-place, and, sweeping the hair off her face, said: "There is one more sort, ma'am. I saw it up there, high, when I dusted. Let me get it."

She fetched the steps, and in a moment had climbed and lifted down a box. She set it on the counter; she opened it herself and held towards him, with a direct glance, a packet with a red rose printed on the wrapper.

Madame Finibald, with an exclamation, snatched it from the girl's hand, and began, as if here had been a little grandchild recovered to her old age, to speak with tenderness of its merits. The girl stood near, twining and untwining a lock around her finger, while she unaffectedly looked at the cus-

tomer. Her hair came below her knees; every moment she had to toss it back out of her face.

"Go back to your window, wicked child!" cried the old witch, suddenly, as if catching at a piece of gold as it was being taken out of her pocket. "Go back!"

"I am tired of sitting!" said the little princess, twisting her shoulders in her frock with the prettiest peevishness. "I have sat and sat and sat! I have finished my story. Let me go out and get a bun. You know you said I could when it was noon."

She caught at her hair, and, to the infinite wonder of one looking on, began twisting, twisting, twisting, coiling, coiling, coiling, driving in great skewers—while he filled his blissful pockets with rose-scented soap.

The bell snapped in fretful reprehension for her passing out. Less than a minute after, it exclaimed in annoyed surprise for his.

Now was he no longer made lonesome by every coquettish touch the more that the year put to her toilet. For the girl of the

regal hair smiled to him, surreptitiously with her lips, but unguardedly with her eyes, when he came by her glass-case; while he dawdled in the window opposite, she communicated with him by signs no other eye could have perceived. Even before their acquaintance had become very old, she slipped out to walk in the garden, and they sat on the green seats and had long, foolish, youthful talks—delightful, foolish, youthful times.

Her conversation took an amusing interest from the peculiarities of her education. She had seen and heard much in her short life in a hard world, where it was no one's affair to keep anything from her young ken—much of dark, and petty, and unpicturesque—preserving through all a sort of hardy innocence; and she had borrowed from a cheap circulating library a vast lot of fiction dealing with the supremely grand. Her preference in literature, however, had remained for fairy tales, a taste formed when it had been one of her duties to read aloud to certain little children of the rich. She knew them by the score. It was to this, perhaps, some of her

remarks owed the fanciful touch that redeemed them from the commonness of her general conversation—a genial commonness, condoned to such young lips. She had a childish way of lending a personality to everything, that amused him more than epigram would have done. She ascribed intention to the wind that blew off her hat, and stopped to express her mind to it. She assumed consciousness in the bench they sat on; she wanted to take the same one, lest it should think they slighted it because it was rickety, for which it was not to blame. Every flower was to her a person. "Hush! They are listening!" she said, looking from the corner of her eye at a bank of knowing pansies. She scolded a button for coming off, as if the want of principle shown by it had been a thing to revolt her. She stood in a one-sided relation of good-fellowship with the brown birds hopping among the gravel, and the fishes in the pond; she spared them many crumbs. With homely good-heartedness she took into an amused regard all the family of spring—

buds, blades, insects—addressing speech to them as if she had been a giant and they a very little people.

Never can spring return without Fraisier's remembering that spring. It was bright; by it all the springs following have been cast in the shadow.

The long hair was woven through and through his thoughts; but not as a disturbing, upheaving element. The girl made him waste a great deal of time, but nothing else —not the life of his heart. Because of her good-nature, her entire want of coquetry or perverseness, his feeling for her complicated itself in nowise; rather it grew simpler as it insensibly changed. His wonder and fine dread at feminine appurtenances had worn away a little with increased familiarity; he reposed on that fact as if it had been such an one as becoming accustomed to the noise of guns. He felt under delicate obligations to her for having routed his shyness, and not at all tormented him in any of the thousand ways he apprehended a feminine being would have at her command.

As he was less and less in awe of her and that suspected arsenal, though a charming, fearful element went out of his sentiment, his affection perhaps grew more. She made such a good little comrade! Insidiously, she connected herself in his mind with future days—she who cared only for the day and the pleasure thereof. When he spoke of a thing it would be pleasant to do, a place pleasant to visit, he said, always unreflectingly, yet from a sincere heart: "Some day we must go there. Let us do such a thing some time." When he described the hills and ponds of home, he said what they might have done had she been there last summer or the years before, how they might have rowed and rambled. He painted the good time they might have together, in some not impossible, but not specified time, place, and circumstances.

So the green from tender grew brilliant—grew deep—became void of interest to the accustomed eye, and more or less dust settled over it. It was manifest to all that spring was past.

Then began an anxious time. Those lectures, those miserable lectures! Those courses, those wretched courses, which he had neglected! That blessed information he had spared to cull when the time was for it! These things seemed likely to get their revenge. When he awoke to a sense of his danger — very late! only when the bloom was off the year, when lily and early rose had gone where they could divert no mortal more—he could not believe that he should not, by fitting exertion, catch up in time at the appointed goal. He worked rabidly, with a wet cloth around his head. He thought not of girls in those days, I promise you; he recked not of bronze-gold hair!

It was written that he should not be saved. He closed his school term pitiably conditioned.

When the worst was known, at least was time to breathe, however sore the lungs, then his mind reverted to her. He had been man enough to harbor no spite towards her, accuse her of nothing. He sent her a message and waited at the appointed place,

wondering a little, while he waited, at his follies of the spring. They seemed so unnecessary, looked back upon now. Why, in a very real, practical world like this one, where a man's failure to pass his exams was sure to call forth from his progenitor letters such as his pocket at this moment contained, conduct one's self as if existing in a world of lambs and purling streams and shepherdesses? He was one with the actual world in looking with astonishment and condemnation upon his own works. The sky above was hard, barren blue; it seemed so easy, looking back, to have stuck to the approved road. What had possessed him?

Then she appeared. At sight of her his heart dropped its armor. She brought back a whiff of the sweetness of a past atmosphere. Was it possible he had ever been the happy boy he seemed to remember! He smiled up in her face with cheek-muscles stiffened by disuse, and eyes ringed with studious shadows. She had on a flimsy frock, printed all over with little flowers that seemed to him to smell good; her hair, where the great wad

projected beyond the straw brim, was touched with a warm, peculiar glory. He had meant to keep himself well hardened against her, tell her the various things necessary in a matter-of-fact way, and bid her good-bye indefinitely. He felt more like crying with his disgraced head in her lap.

He conquered his weakness. . . . A pretty man he made!

He got out with sufficient composure and dignity what he had to say. He told her all that had happened, the change it made in the coming months. He was not going home for the holidays; he could not endure to see the folks. He was going into the country to spend the summer in hard study, to make sure of "passing" next term. He was going to the particular place he mentioned because he had a friend there, a fellow he had taken up with in the last weeks, one that had had the same bad luck as himself. This man's family lived there; it would not be quite so dreary as being alone.

She chaffed and consoled him in turns. Now that the world had gone all wrong with

him, her eyes seemed to him sweeter and softer than he had ever observed. What a good, kind little friend! Lord! what a good, crazy, light-hearted time they had had, and how pretty she looked to-day! What wonderful, thrice wonderful hair it was, waving and ringletting about her glowing summer face, coiling massively on the back of her head! No woman on earth had such hair!

He did wish for a moment that Green, his new friend, might see her—he was proud of her. One night, when they had sat grinding together for mutual assistance, the oil giving out, Green had told him of a cousin of his. Fraisier had said nothing of any girl. He only wished that Green might see the hair of this girl whose name he had foreborne to speak.

Good-bye, Minnie! He should be working like a slave all through the burning golden days — let her think of him a little. He should be very lonesome. When he had studied until his eyes smarted and his head swam, there would be nothing pleasant to do, no one pleasant to talk with—she might

spare a moment to be sorry for him now and then. He should be back in the fall. Bless the beautiful and beautiful and beautiful hair! Good-bye, Minnie!

She so little perished from his mind after their parting that whenever—as Green and he lay under the trees, withdrawn from the world and devoted to arduous studies, keeping off the insects by smoke—Green began talking about that cousin of his, Fraisier became half sick with reminiscence. He could not resist replying by talking—with the finest, shyest reverence always—of Minnie. There was a dreamy solace in talking of her to some one. She described so well, too; so unusually. He had a proud secret assurance that as an incident in a man's life she altogther eclipsed a cousin in interest.

"How long is your cousin's hair?" he asked, with assumed casualness, once. Green stared a little, and confessed not having the slightest idea. Fraisier opened his arms as wide as they could go, and said, vaguely blushing, "The young lady I spoke of has hair as long as this!"

"Come! I should like to see it!" spoke Green, in such a tone that Fraisier turned a deep, vexed red.

He said nothing, but on the next day took his books to a different place, choosing to keep to himself so long as Green did not seek him with a suitable apology.

The spot selected by the young men as a meeting ground lay at an equal distance between Green's home and the cottage in which Fraisier had taken up his summer quarters. It was on the skirts of a wood, and, by some accident of the land, often cool when other places were hot. The rolling pasture it commanded was dotted with scrubby evergreens, and crossed by a small brook the cow's hoofs had in some places trodden broad and shallow. It was colored in patches with the frequent pink of clover-heads, surprised here and there with the white of a long-necked, belated daisy.

Fraisier took himself to a spot just not so far from the usual haunt but that Green when he came might see him.

It was a fair, soft, simmering morning,

promising a scorching day. He stretched himself under the trees and lighted a pipe—he had taken to a pipe in place of cigarettes since coming into the wilderness. He composed himself for a serious forenoon's work, deciding that it was much more profitable, after all, to study alone—Green was always digressing.

The spot he had chosen was not so good, it proved, as the one he had left clear for Green. A path ran through the woods, just within the trees; there was a frequent patter of bare feet on the dust, children with pails passed looking for things. He waited to proceed with his theorem till their high piping, scattered voices had died away. It was not so cool, either; as a fact, it was hotter than most places. He did not crave the exertion of seeking a better; this was at least shady. He turned over on his back and closed his eyes, yielding gracefully to the force of circumstances.

A light blow in the face, from an acorn, perhaps, roused him. He thought of Green, and, instantly broad awake, looked for the development of some practical joke.

It was not Green—he saw it with a sort of disappointment. It was one of the berry-seeking children that had caught sight of him snoozing, and followed its natural instinct. A boy's grinning head was seen bobbing above one of the neighboring bushes. He turned from it in disgust and felt surlily about the grass for his pipe, about his person for a match—

Gracious powers! what sort did the young one take him for, with this free persecution? Another acorn had hit him smartly on the head.

"Look out, there!" he called, making a feint of rising to give chase.

"Come on!" shouted the boy, gayly, from behind the bush. There was a burst of laughter, a flash and flutter of pink, and the boy, who turned out to be a girl, came precipitately towards him. She stopped just short of a collision, and dropped in the grass panting with laughter. He stared at her blankly. Every time she looked up and caught sight of his expression she doubled herself and fairly writhed.

"He doesn't know me!—he doesn't know me!" she brought forth amid her convulsive giggling.

"Minnie! My God! What—what have you done to yourself?" he exclaimed, and had no breath left.

She moderated her laughter, and presented her smiling face a moment for him to see well what had happened. She ran her fingers over her cropped head, ruffling it absurdly, making the short locks stand on end.

"Isn't it funny? Doesn't a person look funny at first? The rest of it is hanging, like a fairy horse's tail, in the window, across the picture of the Elixir lady. (Bad old woman! Cheat! She didn't give me much for it! But, Natty Fraisier, I would have taken even less, I did want to come so!) You poor, lonesome boy! I can stay a whole week—perhaps more. I have found a place in the village, just near you. The first child I met told me all I wanted to know. I thought it would have been harder. Mercy! isn't it heavenly still and sweet here, with hills and cows? I was never in the true

country before. Mercy! isn't it good? Look out, you flower there—over there, you, miss! That is called a bee; he has a terrible stinger —oh, he is an old acquaintance? Go ahead, then, and give him a nice swing, and honey for his tea. Oh, Natty, I am so glad! Aren't you glad?"

He choked and cleared his throat. No, without that voice, never in the world would he have known her. Before him seemed to be a common little street-boy who had run off in a girl's new pink dress and shiny shoes —an unknown boy whose features had something painfully familiar. Strange! He remembered Minnie's face as possessing a certain harmony in its lines, however childish and trivial they were; this terrible little impostor, though not ill favored, was broad of jaw and narrow of forehead; his eyes even were not the same, but smaller and nearer together, while the mouth was larger — its very proneness to laughter increased its commonness. And that ridiculous hair—literally chopped off by an unskilled hand and twisted here and there with unpractised tongs! It

was so thick, it had no more light or lustre than a hearth-brush.

Her face sobered ever so little as she looked at him. "What is the matter? Poor dear! you haven't got over those exams. But I won't bother, you know, and take up all your time; I have learned better. I won't interfere with any work, I promise, Natty. See me swear? On this algebra! Only, before you begin and when you have done each day, we will go for walks and rows. I saw a boat on the pond. We will have lunch on the grass, and make a fire with sticks we pick up. Look! you put three long sticks like that and hang the kettle in the middle. We will do all those things we used to plan when we never much thought there would be a chance. You poor, lonesome boy, have you been having a horrid time? We will make up for it now. Natty, you don't care about the *hair*, do you? You needn't. You know, I had got mortally sick of sitting in that window. I could not have stood it a day longer. When a fly buzzed on the pane I wanted to scream. Again and again I have come near

putting my foot through the glass at one of the gaping faces, then jumping down and catching the old woman while she told lies about my having used her Elixir faithfully —never touched a drop!—and dancing her up and down all around the room until she dropped. I shall go back to taking care of little children now, as I did before she found me. I do love children! And in that business, I don't mind telling you, I shall do better without all that hair. No matter how tight I did it up, some one was always grumbling that it made too much show. You mustn't care a bit about the hair, Natty; I gave it up without a twinge. I cut it off with my own hands. You have no idea how much comfortabler this is in hot weather. My head feels so light! I can dip it in the water any minute. I do love it like this!"

She ran her hands through her hair again, ruffling it still more fantastically. Fraisier winced. He was sick beyond calculating the degree. "Oh, my poor girl!" he contrived at last to say.

She looked at him more closely than before in her overrunning joy, and her face fell a little. No doubt she had seen herself in mirrors since her alteration, but not in a real mirror until she saw herself reflected in his very pale face. She smiled still, but a little foolishly; then no more, and stopped chatting. It was as if a stone had been set to seal up a spring—a large stone laid upon her bubbling heart. There was a silence.

He saw that she must be seeing what he could not keep out of his face. He could not help it; he could get no control over his feelings, over his expression. He was not sure he cared to—he did not try. He was at sea: he did not know what he felt, what he did not feel. The bottom seemed to have dropped out of his heart, out of the world—out of something, everything. He knew not! He only knew he was sick—sick, and incapable of speech, of action, of reflection.

"You can't stay here, child," he heard some one saying, in a matter-of-fact, superficial voice. "Don't you see, yourself, that

you can't? For your own sake, I mean. It would never do, Minnie. You must understand that. You don't know what a thing a small country village like this is, for gossip and slanderous tongues. I couldn't let you injure yourself so, don't you see?"

"It wouldn't be proper?" she inquired, faintly.

"No, Minnie; no, it wouldn't — at all. Don't you see it?"

She got to her feet, full as pale as he now.

"All right," she said, and after a few mechanical steps, paused a moment, looking down, biting her finger—lost in thought, or waiting for something to happen, for him to say something further.

He could not speak—he could not make himself speak.

"All right," she said again, very distinctly, and turned to go without another word.

"Minnie! Minnie!" he faltered, and had instinctively cast himself after her. His outstretched hand almost touched her pink draperies. She turned on him fiercely, whisking herself out of reach. He was confront-

ed for a second by a little angry street-boy face, but with the gathered experience and woe of half a race in the eyes. "Let me alone! Don't dare to touch me! Nathaniel Fraisier, I hate you!"

She began desperately to run. He saw her clutch her poor little ruined head, and heard her cry out, breaking into sobs: "Oh, my hair! Oh, my hair!"

He dropped in the grass, face downward, and pressed his hands over his ears, trembling. It all seemed so strange, so out of proportion.

In the late afternoon of that same hot day the crabbed little bell on Madame Finibald's door snapped to let in a tired, dusty youth, whose dejected face was so flushed, one's thought at sight of him turned at once on sunstroke. He leaned wearily over the counter and asked a few questions, at which madame's liver seemed so shaken she could not keep a hold on her good manners. At the height of her voice she began berating all the world, and one absent person. Fraisier tried to calm her, with vague, soothing mo-

tions of his hands patting down the air. When she subsided enough for him to be heard, he pointed to a long tail of shining hair in the window, and spoke again, growing redder, if possible, than before—so red that his eyes watered, and he had to shade them a moment, leaning his elbows on the counter. She unhitched the hair, shaking it brutally. He put out his hands in remonstrance. She flung it down before him with a forbidding proposition and a deep snort of malice. Meekly he emptied his purse on the counter, unfolding the bills, spreading out the silver and lucky pieces to count, reserving only for himself a crumpled ticket.

She watched him with gleeful, avaricious eyes. After computation, he rose without breath of argument and went down the street to pawn his watch and studs and cigarette-case, returning solvent.

He left with a rather unsightly parcel in his hand; the cover was burst in more than one place. Madame Finibald had not been so particular as she sometimes was in the selection of her wrapping-paper. He had no

overcoat and no pocket large enough to put his prize in; he was forced to hold it, conscious how it was heavy and soft and its contents gleamed through the holes.

He got home at dark, reporting to his landlady with his back to the light. He wanted nothing to eat: there were lamps and voices in the dining-room. He could not go to bed, worn out as he was: on the porch below his window was singing and picking of strings.

He went forth into the fields. At last, beyond all sounds but the summer's own, he sank on the grass. He did not look up once at the stars, but lay sprawling with his forehead on his crossed arms, and let his heart torture itself at its own good leisure. He drank deeper and deeper of its dark bitterness, forcing himself recklessly to it, reaching a sort of desperate drunkenness. It seemed to his inexperience there could be nothing worse at any time in this life to taste.

He woke long hours afterwards, wondering a little at first, feeling somewhat stiff.

THE PASSING OF SPRING

The air was warm and still, tremulous with crickets—thrilled through with the shaken baubles of the summer's myriad little jesters. In his sleep he had rolled over; his face was to heaven. The sky was faint with starlight; the Milky Way was a road of diamond sand; the great constellations had hung themselves with solemn jewels; down near the rim of the world watched far-spaced large earnest beacon-lights — but above, the tiniest irresponsible stars twinkled in and out, like shining ants in ant-hills. He looked, almost wondering why his eyes felt so queer —sore besides heavy; why his breast felt so heavy. He rose sitting; he was on a hillock. Like an opaque reproduction of the transparent, lightsome sky looked the ground about him, which the scythe had this season respected; it was dark dotted with daisies. He rubbed his aching head a little, then lay back again, the grass shooting coolly up along his cheeks. After the sound, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion from which he had waked, because he had drained it to satisfaction, his head was numbed, but,

the little it worked, clear in its working; his heart was sore, but quieted. Something had changed; all wore another aspect; all seemed farther removed. Hours had gone by already, a month would go — a year — fifteen years. This would be lived out of memory. If it is realized that a thing must cease, has it not begun to die already? At the first one must be patient, and take suffering as a matter of course. He stretched his limbs wearily, not entirely deceived by himself, nor unaware of depths of heartache under this film of philosophy that had scummed them over in sleep. He drew his hot palms over the grass; his hand came upon the parcel that he had not dared to leave behind nor to open, that he never would have the strength to open — and his philosophy was severely shaken. His heart was near bursting out afresh; he laid his face on the wretched, soft, dead little bundle, and agonized.

Then he revolted against this suffering that seemed to him undeserved, disproportionate. He was not a bad fellow; looking

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into his heart, he could declare truthfully that it was not in him to willingly harm anything—give any one pain. Why should he feel so endlessly mean, so endlessly miserable? He appealed to Minnie, his reasonable Minnie of old, against this state of things. He defended himself to her; she defended him to himself. When all was said, he had at no time done anything to blame, had that day said nothing that was not wise and for the best, that he would not in like case be forced to say over again. He had been taken unawares; he had not expressed himself with tact—he had been fatally slow. The fact remained that the girl could not have stayed by him, setting the whole country-side agog. But if his heart still refused to be at peace about this matter, let it be assured he meant to seek till he found the girl; it must be easy enough to find her, though he had failed that day. Alas! poor little forlorn head, shorn of its great gleaming beauty—poor little discrowned head, at this hour full of what thoughts, God knew! He would make all things right to her; he

was extravagantly ready to pay any price; he was lavish of his future, free of all the gods gave him to give. At the same time that he made these protestations to himself and to her, and he was sincere in making them, he knew that Minnie would never look at him again — he knew that she had understood how he was changed with the change in her; it was beyond his governing, but she must be forgiven for not forgiving it. And looking into his man's heart, he wondered at the mystery of it.

In that hour of being honest, after revolting at it, reasoning about it, trying to sophisticate it away, he came back always to a hopeless contemplation of it as a simple fact, not to be done away with. In the face of it he might clear himself of all blame, perhaps, but he remained humiliated and full of a vague pity. As he lay in the grass so, plucking heedlessly in the dark at the little tufts, emptied of all pride under the lofty stars, a dreamy mood followed upon what degree of success he had in suppressing feelings he was determined not to en-

dure, so did they hurt! His thoughts in search of soothing travelled back to days before last spring, when he could hardly have conceived what he had this night been suffering. Peaceful period, but without great charm, he decided, loyal to his altered taste. He thought of the past spring, the soft awakening all without and within a man—the tender, vast burgeoning, fluttering, shimmering, outreaching! He judged it sadly from a midsummer night. Not all were flowers that put forth in that mad amenity of nature; no, not all flowers.

And in connection with all that freshness and fragrance and beauty of spring, he thought unavoidably of what had seemed to his new-quickened heart its very expression, its chiefest adornment—the gentle order he loved in so general and devoted a way. His conjuring head filled with charming phantoms, pathetic to his sense at this juncture; they passed, exquisite pageant, leaving as if a perfume of themselves through the halls of his mind, not one little grace, one foolish trick, one dainty manner of be-

ing, lost on his worshipping sensibility: silver laughter—odors of violets—sunny loose hairs and white hand tucking them behind the ear—pretty feet tiptoeing across the street in bad weather—pouted lips cooing to a baby, or quaintly attempting its own language to a bird—languid attitudes—belts of a span—caprices—teasing humors—tenderness—pity for small creatures—long lashes blinking a tear—queenly bearing—rods of lily held over bowing heads with such assurance of power as never a sceptre — aye, power greater than any emperor's, founded, dear God—upon what? at the mercy — of what? And he yearned and grieved over them, poor youth, as if he had been their maker.

PAULA IN ITALY

ON his way down-stairs Prospero came upon the *padrona di casa.*

She stood at the door of the first floor, which he had supposed untenanted, the windows on the street being always dark. She looked pleased, anxious, and full of business.

"Just step in for a moment, signorino," she said, "and tell me what it seems to you."

The young man followed her. The windows of the apartment were wide open—most likely to let in the heat, for to lean forth beyond the chill boundary of the stone walls was like dipping into a warm bath. The long, old, neatly darned lace curtains waved gently in the April air. The stone floors had been sprinkled; a

pleasant freshness arose from them. Everything had an air of having just been gone over with a damp dust-cloth; everything that could be furbished shone to the utmost of its capacity.

The little woman led Prospero into the large *sala*, from which, through several open doors, one got glimpses of other airy chambers. The great height of the ceiling — increased to illusion by the cunning of the fresco, which professed to open into the sky itself, and show a flight of rosy cupids tumbling among the clouds — had the effect of dwarfing the furniture, even the gigantic vases under their shining bells. The seats were placed about in social groups; in the embrasure of the balcony window stood a small table supporting a coral-colored coffee service, lately placed between two low chairs, with a view to spreading about suggestions of cosiness—the joys of intimate life.

"I see that you are expecting a tenant," said Prospero.

"So it is indeed; a great lady — a foreigner," replied the *padrona*, under her

breath. "Just see, signorino, what you make of this name." While she felt in her pocket she went on: "It is Dottor Segati sends her to me. Oh, he has sent me families before when there was a patient among them; and this apartment has always given satisfaction; that I can say with my hand upon my conscience. There—can you read it? I can tell the letters, but I can't make the sound. One ought to have another tongue on purpose for these foreign names."

Prospero studied a second, then pronounced, clearly, "Gräfin Paula von Schattenort."

"*Gräfin* means Countess," said the landlady. "The doctor told me that she is a Countess; but whether Danish or Swedish or Hollandish I don't remember. For me all those countries are the same. Schattenort, you call it? What would that be in Italian?"

Prospero laughed. "It stays as it is, dear lady. Is this Countess young, do you know?" he went on, looking again at the name on

the paper he still held. "Is she coming here for her health?"

"I don't know anything beyond the fact that the doctor engages the rooms for her, and I can rely upon him. Oh, he has sent me families before, you know, who have always been perfectly satisfied with me, and I with them. You can see yourself that the quarters are such that even a Countess might find herself well in them—"

"Yes, truly," replied Prospero, agreeably. "She would be hard to please if she were not content. Well, if you allow me now, I go. Have you perhaps a commission of any sort for me? I shall do myself a pleasure in serving you."

"Too good — much too good. If you would just say the name over—"

"Von Schattenort."

"What it is to have a memory! What a thing is education! Not but that also I can make myself understood in the French tongue. Schattenort—Schattenort. I should not like to *scomparire*, you will understand, at the very first meeting. But if I forget, I will

simply say *Signora Contessa.* Only one likes to be able to tell friends whom one has got in the house."

Prospero, late already, was hurrying down the stairs, his music under his arm; at the foot he was forced to stop. He took off his hat, and leaned against the wall to let the ladies pass.

The gray-haired gentleman talking unpractised French he knew to be Dottor Segati. He fixed upon Paula von Schattenort without a second's hesitation; of the two ladies, only the one in the hat and feather could, in his conception of possibility, be she. He was half-conscious as she passed him on her upward way of a faint pang of disappointment. The name had suggested to his imagination something tall and frail, delicate yet imposing, exceedingly, luminously blond, with eyes of a corn-flower blue. The magic of the name was defeated.

He bethought him how late he would be, and without turning his head for a second look, or giving another thought to the arrivals, slipped past the two maids, who stood

in the doorway talking in a language unknown to him, while the Countess's man handed them bundles from the carriages drawn up to the door.

Paula, on entering the apartment, let her little gloved hands drop at her sides, and looking around with wide, quick eyes, gave a long sigh of pleasure.

"Here I can breathe—here I can breathe indeed!" she said to her companion, in their Northern tongue; then turning to the doctor, she assured him in French that she found it charming, as she had found everything in Italy — that she thanked him for his goodness. The doctor and the landlady both watched her with a half smile and slightly raised eyebrows as she walked quickly through the rooms, exclaiming at every window with delight at sight of the fawn-colored, warm-looking river flowing below and flashing back the sunshine, and the low hills clothed in their early green.

Her companion followed her with an unusual solemn dignity of manner, intended to counterbalance Paula's unaccustomed vi-

vacity, and give the people of the house, if possible, an adequate impression of the two as a whole.

"Oh, look—look, Cousin Veronika!" exclaimed the younger woman from the balcony, over the parapet of which she had been leaning venturously far—"look at that dear old bridge; it is the Jeweller's Bridge; I recognize it. *N'est-ce pas, cher docteur?* Oh, what a sky! But have you any patients at all in this city, doctor? Is it possible to be ill here? Do persons die? Of what? I will never believe it!"

"My dear lady," said the gray doctor, his kindly face lighting as if with the reflection of her childish excitement, "will you be advised by me? Will you sit down on this commodious divan and rest a little, while you take what the signora has brought for you—this little glass of our white *vin santo?* It will do you good. You must be tired, very tired."

"Oh no! no, doctor! It is like magic. I do not understand it. I feel like another. I shall not be tired here, ever. You must

come and see me every day indeed, but not as a doctor—as my good, good friend. Tell me, is it still standing, the house where Dante lived? Have you a book—I mean, could you advise me a book—in which there is everything of the story about him and Beatrice? It must be sweet to think of when one is in their city."

"I will do myself the pleasure of sending you the *Vita Nova*," he said; then, solicitously, "but accommodate yourself, my dearest lady, and drink this—"

"*Vita Nova?* Does that mean new life? New life!" she said, as if to herself, suddenly half stretching her arms up in the air and smiling in indeterminate happiness at the ceiling, whereon the shining river cast a restless, quivering brightness. "Yes, send it me; I want to read it. I will drink this to please you, signor, but not that I am tired. Here is to New Life!"

She touched her glass to the doctor's and Veronika's, and emptied it at an eager draught. Veronika watched her in surprised displeasure, sipping her own wine staidly and

decorously. It warmed her very heart to see Paula merry, only she thought it unbecoming to behave in the presence of strangers as if one were a person of no importance.

Her good-humor returned as soon as the doctor and the *padrona* had excused themselves. When they were alone she seized Paula unceremoniously by the wrists and forced her back into an arm-chair; then lifted her feet, and with much decision placed them upon a footstool. "Now you don't stir," she said, shaking her finger in Paula's face.

"But, cousin, it is so different," pleaded Paula. "I feel no more as I do at home, than this mild, heavenly air is like our joyless atmosphere. Are your eyes open, Cousin Veronika? Do you perceive the things about you—or is it all a dream of my own? It seemed to me as we drove from the station that we had arrived in an enchanted place."

"It's just a city," murmured Veronika.

"Those sombre palaces we passed, how they make the spring-time in the sky above

them more lightsome, more warm! And those flowers banked up for sale against that black stone wall, could you see what they were? They seemed to me all new sorts—marvellous. Have you noticed how happy every one looks in Italy, even the beggars sitting in the sun? And what beautiful faces one sees—"

She stopped and mused, gazing ahead in silence for a few moments; then went on aloud: "Yes—beautiful faces, like pictures. Did you see the young man whom we met on the stairs? Not? Veronika, for what have you eyes? The light just there was a little dim, but I saw him perfectly. I passed him slowly on purpose—he leaned against the wall to let us go by him. He had wavy hair, longer than is usual, falling over his forehead, and soft brown eyes like an animal's. I am sure one sees such eyes only in Italy, half asleep, yet deeply intelligent, that when you look in them you think a thousand things—"

"You certainly took in a great deal at a glance," said Veronika.

"Oh, I could tell you much else," laughed Paula; "beside that he wore a pink in his button-hole and carried a roll of music."

"Veronika," she said, after a pause, jumping up from her chair and walking about excitedly as before, "we must be very happy here. We must begin at once. Think how much time we have lost — all our years up to this day. Now we must really enjoy ourselves, live—love!" she added, recklessly, with light in her eyes.

Veronika, kneeling over an open satchel, paused in her task to look over her spectacles with a vaguely shocked air, as if something immoral had been said.

"This seems like the opening chapter in a lovely story-book that becomes more interesting with every page," said Paula, dropping on her knees and crushing her cheek to Veronika's gray hair, with an expansiveness that took this lady aback. "I have the happiest presentiments! Ah, Veronika, there was once a woman who said that happiness is to be young, beloved, and in Italy!"

"Unless you keep quiet and rest," said

Veronika, "you will be ill, and that is as far as *you* will get—"

Paula stared a second in wonder at Veronika's impatience; then she reflected that her cousin was old and could not understand. "Poor Veronika!" she thought, with a sympathetic shake of the head, "*she* can never have but Italy!"

Like a good child, she went back to her chair, but before settling down in it she pushed it to the balcony window; then she sat with her eyes fixed upon San Miniato.

Dr. Segati came the next day, early. He found Paula pale and infinitely tired, but wearing a contented face. She sat in the balcony window, closed to-day, with a cushion behind her shoulders; flowers stood in the water near her — a delight to the eyes, wonderful wind-flowers, white and pink, purple, scarlet, pale violet. She rose to meet the doctor, and gave him the childish smile that had won his heart to her the day before.

She pointed to the book she held. "It came last night. I thank you. I am trying

to read it, you see. But I do not know enough. I can make only just a little sense here and there, where it resembles French. Oh, I like it all the same—very much. The title is beautiful—*Vita Nova!*"

"Tell her she must not read, doctor," said Veronika. "It is bad for her. She has been tiring herself over the book."

The doctor listened politely, an intelligent eye fixed on Veronika's, and made no objection to what she said. She had always after that half an idea that he understood her.

"I had the cook sent in," said Paula, with a brightening face. "The native cook whom the *padrona* was so good as to engage for me. I asked her about some passages. She could read them easily—how I envied her! —but she could not make them clear to me, though she seemed to do her best."

The doctor laughed amusedly, and took a seat beside her. "What an eager little lady! Certainly that is the way to learn. But why this hurry? The great object first is to become robust. Oh, this air will do it! I have no fear. And how did you sleep?"

Paula blushed as if caught in fault. "I don't know why it should be I lay awake so much. My old doctor at home (I bless him for his inspiration of sending me here!) has written you about me, I suppose. I dare say you know I cough sometimes in the night. Doctor," she asked, abruptly, "who lives above us?"

He looked interrogatively at the ceiling, and shook his head.

"Oh, I am so sorry you do not happen to know. It is a great musician, and I feel much gratitude towards him. I was becoming nervous with lying awake—I was on the point of calling my poor cousin—when some one began playing on the piano in the room above me. Sweetly, very sweetly. I could hear it just distinctly enough. It was a joy. I lay awake, but it soothed me more than sleep."

"I seem to remember that there is a music-master living in the house," said the doctor. "I will beg the *padrona* to speak to him. He should not play in the night."

"Not at all," exclaimed Paula, with a

warmth he could not expect. "Please, I want him to play. I shall be grieved if you say anything to prevent him. It does not keep me awake. If I were sleepy I could not hear it."

The doctor prolonged his visit far into the forenoon. At the first movement he made to go, Paula said, pleadingly: "Oh, not yet. I entertain myself so willingly with you!" And he stayed.

He was interested, in the woman as well as in the case. She was different from his other aristocratic patients. She was of a type new to him; without appearing to, he studied her face as she spoke, and from it, and from frequent allusions she dropped, he built up a theory of her past.

He divined that she was older than she looked. It was, he resolved, the childlike glance and smile, the voice as of shyness overcome, her artlessness, her continually outcropping ignorance of the world, her immature mind perhaps, that gave the impression of youthfulness one at first received from her. If one looked well, she

had even already a sad little beginning of faded appearance. Her face was a trifle broad, and the high cheek-bones were commencing slightly to accuse themselves, as they say in French. The charm of her countenance, to such as felt it, lay in her eyes: they were unsophisticated, hopeful, interested, idealizing eyes. Vanity, it must be pityingly related, had taught her nothing. Her blond hair, dull and fine and soft — a large treasure that would have made the boast of many another woman—was drawn away rigorously from her forehead, braided, and wound compactly against the back of her head, like a school-girl's.

He noticed with amused wonder how unpretending—nay, provincial, homely, for persons of rank and fortune — was the *mise* of the two women. Fashion by them was misconstrued, or else despised. He did not incline to the latter interpretation of their plainness; he rather laid to a touching innocence of the mode's dictates Mamsell Veronika's pelerine and the black lace tabs on the sides of her head; the antiquated cut

of Paula's deep violet gown, the little black silk mitts that covered her pale pretty hands to the point where her rings began. These were numerous rather than rich, and gave the impression of being heirlooms — things worn for a memory: brilliants mounted in darkening silver, enamels, carnelians; one showed a pale gleam of human hair.

Paula had never spoken so much about herself to any one as she did to the doctor. Her loquacity was an effect of her unreasoning instinct that in this new place everything was good to her, every influence favorable. She let herself go in a way that would have seemed out of her nature at home.

All she had ever read in the long, melancholy winter evenings at Schattenort, of poetry or romance, came back to her mind in essence, drawn to the surface by an inexplicable magic. Her conversation in this mental excitement teemed with allusions and modest flowers of speech that almost surprised herself, and gave her a strange delight. She felt as she were some one she had some time read of.

"Oh, we will make you well, quite well, soon," said the doctor, cheerily, on taking his leave. "But you must promise to be very good, very prudent."

He gave his directions with a light air, but as he turned from the door a shadow settled upon his kindly old face.

In his breast-pocket lay folded the letter his colleague, Paula's former doctor, had written him. The consciousness of what was said in it gave rise in his heart to a tender, grateful thought of his own children—grown-up daughters, fair and healthy, happily established in life.

Paula had hoped to go for a drive that day, but a light rain fell, and she could only watch the turbid stream outside through the glistening window-pane. She sat with her forehead leaning against it, her book in her lap. Now and then she opened this and let her eyes wander over the lines, without trying to understand, just for a pleasure she found in its being Italian too.

She had prevailed upon Veronika to go out for a walk, so that she might amuse

her with an account of what there was to see.

Towards evening the clouds broke. She saw the red reflection of the sunset on the river. Tempted, she opened the balcony door; a smell of damp stone came gratefully to her nostrils. She slipped out and leaned over the cool balusters, and looked up and down the empty gleaming street. The hills were as if washed with wine; the air was sparkling. She heard a footstep; she hoped it might be Veronika's. She looked. But it was not a woman. She recognized the young man who had been on the stairs when she arrived. He did not look up. She leaned over to see him disappear in the *portone* below. Then, swiftly, she came indoors and stopped in the middle of the floor. She listened intently. In a few moments she thought to hear, faintly, faintly, footsteps in the room above. She clasped her hands silently, saying to herself with unaccountable excitement: "I knew it already. I knew it well."

Late in the night again she heard music.

She had been listening for it a long time. Night to her was often tediously long. Often she spent many hours staring at the square of paler darkness, star-bestrewn, the window made. At a certain pitch of nervousness, soon reached when the city had become quiet and the stillness of the bedroom was full of mysterious sounds, she always thought of a dear sister she had lost, rehearsing old sad scenes vivid in her brain as if they had been lived through but yesterday. Her own physical discomfort increased as she thought of that other girl's long-drawn-out suffering. It seemed to her that already she could not breathe; her body was damp with sweat of fear. "It is all useless!" she groaned, tossing wretchedly. "I too — I too am going that way!" Then she prayed diligently, and looked out up at the stars with a return of tranquillity, hoping steadfastly in a beautiful world beyond them.

But on the night in question she lay patiently and happily watchful. And late in the night again she heard music. No very definite melody was played; it was as

if skilful hands were dreamily straying over the keys, unravelling a little tangled skein of musical impression, thinking aloud. The tune wandered and flitted like a butterfly over a summer garden. Paula's thought climbed upward and entered the musician's chamber. She saw him clearly, leaning back, looking upward, swaying slightly. She took joy in the symmetry of his dark Italian face. She pictured him intensely, and held her breath gazing. Then she tried to build up his surroundings; she adorned his room poetically.

Satisfied at last, her imagination folded its wings and dropped back into its nest. She merely listened, and let herself be comforted; accepted passively what dreams the music imposed. It was as if she and another were walking in a moonless starry night along a quiet village road; and the dewy flowers in the stilly little gardens skirting the way were giving forth perfume in the warm dark. Then it was as if another and she were in a boat with drooping sail, becalmed, drifting slowly. The

moon was behind a great cloud wonderfully silvered on the ravelled edges; the sea at the horizon was a streak of pure light. The other had laid her on velvet cushions and covered her with a cloak, was playing and singing softly to her. They hoped the wind would not rise. Drifting—drifting. And she slept.

In the gayest mood next day she showed the doctor a little package of letters to different persons in the city, but said that she was not ready yet to let these distinguished ones know of her arrival; she must first attend to various important things. He derived from her words that she wished to make her establishment more elegant, and became gruff and severe when she asked him to procure for her the address of the most fashionable mantua-maker. She almost cried when he forbade the expense of any precious energy on worldly vanities, but was half consoled by his promise soon to make her well enough to employ a master in the art of playing the guitar.

He prescribed a daily drive in the sun-

niest hour. Paula came back from her first excursion with flushed cheeks. Veronika grumbled: "I will tell the doctor, and he will forbid your going out at all. It is not to kneel in damp churches will help you. You might as well take up your abode in the cellar."

"Don't scold me," said Paula, gently. "I had to thank God."

Towards sunset she seated herself on the balcony wrapped in fleecy white, and looked down the street towards the Jeweller's Bridge. She saw Prospero come. But he did not look up. That night again she heard him play.

Many times she sat on the balcony and saw Prospero coming. Sometimes he looked up, but oftener he passed into the house unaware of a Countess gazing after him from above.

Some nights he did not play; those were restless, disappointed nights for her.

Once or twice she met him on the stairs as she was going to her carriage; he glanced at her with an unimpressed eye, then looked

elsewhere, standing against the wall, hat in hand.

Occasionally she saw him in the street, but he seemed never to see her. A vague heartache grew out of those occasions.

The Italian spring deepened in warmth and color; the air had a fragrance, some days, as of lilacs; other days, more penetrating, as of hyacinths. The little hills in the midst of which Florence lies took on dewy morning hues of the opal, changing evening tints of the dark dove's neck. The pure noon light made the statues in the King's Garden, where Paula walked sometimes, look dazzlingly white against the sombre walls of clipped laurel. The open country now was full of blossoming fruit trees; Paula often begged Veronika to alight from the carriage and gather for her the flowers she saw shining in the grass — primroses and violets, tulips, narcissi, fleurs-de-lis. She brought home immense nosegays, which she spent long minutes breathing; this perfume of Italy went to her brain.

At sunset once a red flower lay by chance on the rail of the balcony, just where a movement of her arm would brush it off; it would drop in the street. A bold thought crossed her mind. But that evening Prospero did not come at the usual hour. She sat outside, trembling slightly as the dusk closed around her and the dew fell; then Veronika, with shrill cries of surprise and blame, came to fetch her in. She felt guilty and ashamed, and did not protest. She spent the evening on the divan, with her face to the wall, crying softly with a vast invincible melancholy, a sense of forlornness and failure, giving no explanation of her humor.

She was kept in-doors for many days after that. Only she insisted upon being folded in a fur and seated on the balcony at a certain hour every afternoon. The beggar-woman stationed at the street corner with a basket on her knees got used to seeing the sick *forestiera* appear, who always threw her a bit of silver, and gave her a faint little smile.

Veronika suffered from Paula's silence and depression. She went about with two deep lines constantly between her updrawn brows. Her heart misgave her; her inability to communicate with the doctor and those around her became a gnawing despair. She formed a habit, which never left her after, of talking audibly to herself. She gave up the effort to hold cheerful conversation with Paula, and simply tried to preserve in her presence an unconcerned attitude. She secretly yearned to be at home. She felt an unappeasable animosity towards this Italy, that had seemed to do her Paula so much good, only to make her worse. She began to hate everything Italian.

Paula herself sat by the window watching the hills opposite with an absent face. Now and then she rose to take a few desultory steps about the large room, touching the things, passing her hand over the flowers, making the guitar-strings give forth a murmur as she brushed them; she went back to her chair and closed her eyes, tired out.

Once a friend was walking at Prospero's

side. They were talking. As they approached, the friend looked up, and evidently asked a question of Prospero, who looked up too: she thought his lips framed her name. Her heart leaped; she drew back, faint, and felt foolish at feeling such pleasure. She waited more eagerly than usual that night to hear him; it seemed the music must have a special message for her. Silence — utter, atrocious. The night seemed unending.

The doctor wondered next day what spring had broken within her. She showed so little interest in anything; she was fretful as he had never seen her before. He scarcely knew how to conduct himself to avoid irritating her. At a loss, he picked up the little tome of *Vita Nova*, that always lay on the table at her side, and inquired of her progress in it.

"Oh, put it away!" she said, tears springing to her eyes. "Put it away! I cannot suffer it. That title exasperates me; it works upon my nerves. Doctor, doctor, I shall never be well again!" and she poured forth a long complaint.



"PAULA HERSELF SAT BY THE WINDOW"

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He feigned to make light of her fears; he comforted her. Casting about in his mind for things to say that should divert, interest her in her gray mood, he found this, which brought the sudden color to her face:

"Did you not once ask me who lived in the apartment above? I know now. I will not take the credit of having applied myself to discover just on that hint of curiosity from you; I confess hearing it by chance. Your neighbor is the young *maestro* Prospero C——, celebrated in his way. He has written an opera, to be produced for the first time precisely to-night. Those who know promise great things for it—"

She had leaned forward, listening thirstily. The doctor could congratulate himself.

When Veronika went to the door with him, he turned upon her suddenly, and asked, almost violently: "Why did you wait so long? Why did you not bring her to this climate before?"

She looked at him in a puzzled way, and in her turn said something he could not understand.

He appeared for a moment as if he meant to shake her, but shrugged his shoulders and brusquely left.

Some who were present at the first night of "Parisina" remember well how when the curtain dropped on the first act and they looked about to discover whom they should salute, their attention was arrested by the strange apparition in one of the second-tier boxes. There, in a crimson velvet chair, sat very upright an unknown lady in a gown such as no one nowadays wears—a gown of cloth of gold, that might have figured at a court ball perhaps a century earlier. An ermine-lined mantle half covered her arms and neck, dainty thin and white as wax, and half extinguished the gleam of her heavy jewels. A wreath of roses was twined in her pale hair, that might have made one laugh in its *démodé* pretentiousness but that one divined the lady to be a foreigner from some Northern country, where perhaps it is still customary to adorn the hair with a garland. She held her fan like a sceptre, her fingers stiffly closed on the pearl sticks. A

mass of roses lay in her lap. She turned a colorless face upon the stage; her eyes were wide and glassy, and fixed as a somnambulist's.

On the opposite side of the box, less clearly defined against the darkness, sat an elderly, soberly clad lady, whose face expressed a degree of uneasiness, misery, and fear almost pitiful — if not comical — to behold. She made no pretence of interest in the stage or the gleaming galleries, but watched her golden-haired companion with an unswerving, frightened eye.

No one knew who these were, though many took pains to discover.

Through the second act the lady in gold listened breathlessly, as if life itself were suspended. It seemed to her that the soul left her body, and went floating up, up, on the strains of the music. She was praying, praying with all her strength, for the success of this work, that the people might feel just as she felt how it was beautiful!

When a crash of applause came and a call for the composer, it seemed but an answer to her prayer. She rose to her feet, radiant.

Prospero C—— came to the foot-lights below, looking a slight thing, the acclaimed great man, in his close black evening dress, and bowed his thanks. Then, as the applause continued, he lingered a moment, and let his eye pass along the friendly faces in the boxes, a grateful emotion expressed in his smile.

The lady in gold leaned over the velvet parapet, breathing short, tremulously smiling, her flowers in her hands. His eye passed her unrecognizing. She wanted to shout: "It is I, Paula! Nothing could keep me away!" The clamor subsided. Panting, she leaned back in the shade.

The third act ended in triumph. Again the composer was called. Paula laughed and cried at the same time, clapping her little hands like mad, forgetting herself.

Then, when it was all over and she sat in the dark carriage rolling homeward, she felt a chill seizing upon her very heart; she began to shiver. But her physical condition scarcely interested her; a sense of the sad things of life weighed heavily upon her: the vanity of

earthly hopes, the evanescence of happy things, the inequality in the measure of pain and pleasure to God's children, the fugitiveness of illusions, the foolishness of dreams. She thought of the beggar sitting at the corner in sun and rain through years: she felt disgust for a world where such things could be. She said, "It is a good thing to have done with it. It is a deliverance. I will not give it one regret; no, not one." She felt suddenly that she did not love Italy: it had betrayed her. "It is you, you who are to blame," she said, full of helpless resentment, shaking a pale small hand vaguely from the window out at the balmy moonlit world; "you, soft air! you, flower smell! you, velvety firmament with the many-colored stars! I was a simple soul: my common life was enough for me; you sowed in my unguarded heart all the seeds of vain dreams, and fostered them. And they bear no fruit; they wither on their shallow roots —they are weeds!—But I will not curse you, for God made you lovely."

She closed her eyes; her thoughts turned

to remote Schattenort; she wished she were there again, in the dull, quiet, big, cold, familiar country house where she had been born and bred. A mist of bitter longing rose in her eyes. The moon was shining clamorously, obtrusively; it cast a green light, a light almost warm, on the pale pavement. She hated its fervent beauty. "Would God I were home!" she sighed.

Veronika, mistaking her meaning, said, "You are almost there."

Paula suffered Veronika and her maid to put her to bed. She seemed not to notice them. She was thinking—far away. Out of habit she listened a moment for the piano above. But all was silent. "He is happy," she said to herself; "he has gone with his friends. Or perhaps he is up there living it all over again." And her imagination, touched anew with the old obstinate insanity, took the road up to his never-seen chamber, bent over him, and rejoiced with him. "Oh, if I could—" she said; "if I could! But he will never know how a dying noble lady used to listen to his playing in the dead of night,

and loved him, and left him her blessing—"

Veronika had no sleep that night. Before day the doctor was summoned. He remained several hours. At going he drew Veronika aside, and by signs succeeded at last in procuring from her the package of letters the Countess had once shown him. He looked at the superscriptions, and took from among them one "To the Abbé S——."

That evening he brought with him a white-haired old man in priestly garb, whom Veronika was relieved to hear address her in her native tongue.

Presently, with muffled footsteps and a frightened, solemn mien, she led him into the Countess's bedroom, dimly lighted by shaded candles, and left them long alone together.

Prospero, returning home that night, opened the window wide and stood a moment looking out at the stars, at peace with life, every desire for the moment hushed, satisfied. Then he lighted the candles on the piano, and the faint yellow illumination

brought out a hint of color in the objects around. It showed an ordinary, rather bare room; he lived in it very little. The littering music and the piano formed its chief adornment.

He sat down, but for a moment did not touch the keys. He removed the flower from his coat and smelt it, thinking of Rosina, who had given it him at the theatre door — Rosina with the broad velvet-faced hat, the tight silk dress, the diamonds in her ears, and the small basket of flowers on her arm. She was pretty—oh, pretty! Having thought how pretty she was, he wisely tossed away her faded favor, determining to remain cold and prudent. He shook back his hair, as if thereby to free his mind of her, spread his hands over the ivory keys, and began, as he loved to do before sleeping, to let his fancies and emotions make themselves sound.

He played long, losing himself, finding a melodious vesture for his half-formed dream. The night was very quiet; it came to be very late without his perceiving it. Sudden-

ly he felt a cool air on his forehead — he looked up, and paused in his playing, his hands motionless above the keys, his lips open. He felt that he ought to speak, but his voice failed to answer his will. He was asking himself in the dim background of his consciousness how the Countess Paula von Schattenort had entered his dwelling so noiselessly, and what she might be seeking there. More clearly he was wondering at her face, strangely still and white, vaguely woe-begone, astonished, pathetic. He recognized her, yet she seemed to him altered from the one he sometimes saw on the balcony and met on the stairs—that object without interest, a woman not pretty. Perhaps it was the wonderful hair that, shining along her cheeks like a pale gilded mist, transfigured her. The firm fine braids that heretofore he had seen always wound in austere simplicity about her head were undone; the narrowly waved hair floated to her knees; her face peered wistfully between two shimmering bands of it. She was clothed in a white garment bordered with

dark fur; a heavy rosary hung about her neck.

She looked at him a long moment with fixed eyes, an expression of plaintive disillusion, and said nothing.

He tried to ask in what manner he might serve her, but his tongue was numb.

She turned and looked all about the room, very slowly, as a person seeking something. Then she looked again at him, silently, with that same face of disappointment; and her hands, that had been tightly shut on the golden crucifix appended to her rosary, opened and slipped softly to her sides. She turned to the door. He rose from his seat, and without taking his eyes from her, fumbled to lift the candle from its socket, to light her way; he was awkward in his amazement. He saw her pass the threshold. In a second he followed her. She was not in the next room. He passed through the two rooms that separated him from the door leading to the common stairway. He came to the door; it was as he had left it, secured for the night. Seized with dismay, in spite of the thought

that she must have lingered behind in the shady embrasure of a window, he undid the chain and bolt and came out on the landing and looked, expecting inconsistently to see a white figure vanishing down the steps. He saw nothing but a faint light cast upon the wall at the turn of the stairs. He stood hesitating.

In a moment he heard below a sound of weeping; he went down with a trembling of the knees. On the landing of the *piano nobile* was the landlady. She had set her little brass lamp on the last step, and was crying. The door to the Countess's apartment was wide open, and the draught from there made the tiny flame flicker and smoke.

"What is it?" said Prospero, in a husky whisper.

"She is dead, the poor lady!" sobbed the *padrona*.

He felt his hair softly rising.

DORASTUS

SHE had large violet eyes, of a melancholy effect, and fine honey-colored hair, flowing smoothly over her ears. She looked excessively meek and always a little apprehensive, as if accustomed to reproaches, yet never quite hardened to them. One easily supposed her to be an orphan.

She lived with an aunt, her mother's half-sister, considerably older and less pleasing than her mother in that charming woman's brief day. Her cousins were all older than she; the girls were so perfect in every respect that intimacy between her and them was out of the question; the son, a big, blunt young man, was mostly away, and, when at home, too much taken up with other interests to be more than just aware of the violet eyes. So,

life was very dull for Emmeline—"Emmie" she was familiarly called.

She went often of an evening to her mother's grave, and, sitting beside it, reflected how it was in keeping with the general sadness of things that there should be no prospect of any change for her in all the years of her life, no change from the present weary round of aunt and cousins, of sterile duties and insipid pleasures.

And there, by her mother's grave, came the very change she was sighing for. She sat on the sward, musingly watching the square tower of the church grow gray against the delicate, flushed sky, when she became aware of a stranger going from stone to stone in the fading light, examining the inscriptions. At first she was afraid. While she debated whether to hide or flee, the stranger approached, and in a foreign voice and accent asked some common question about the place. She could not answer readily for a foolish shame mixed with terror. She got to her feet, blushing, then turning pale. It could be none other than the astonishing fiddler who

had played the night before in the hall at Colthorpe, and who could, they said, make your hair rise on end by the power of weird, unearthly music, or your eyes dissolve with tenderness—as he chose. She stared without speech into his dark, peculiar face. And he, seeing that she was discomfited, instead of apologizing and withdrawing, undertook, in a tone as persuasive as his violin's, to set her at ease. And when a few days later he disappeared from that part of the world, the violet eyes disappeared too.

Aunt Lucretia in time received a letter, asking her forgiveness and announcing Emmie's marriage.

She did not grant her forgiveness until several years later, after due savoring of sad, black-bordered letters from Emmie, imploring kindness. Her husband, after a brief illness, was dead; her little boy and she were left alone, without anything in the world. She acknowledged her fault so humbly; she owned so freely that her marriage had been excessively—deservedly—wretched; she longed so desperately to be taken back into her old

home, that Lucretia found herself relenting. Her daughters were now married and lived at a distance; she felt daily more and more the need of a female companion. Her son, after reading the young widow's pitiful appeals, protested that it would be inhuman to refuse her a shelter. It was decided that she should be allowed to come, and in time the big, blunt Gregory, of whom she had been afraid in old days, went a long stretch of the journey to meet her, for that had seemed to him requisite, though to his mother superfluous. He even crossed the arm of sea that she must presently be crossing, with no apparent purpose but to cross it again with her.

When the boat was well out at sea and the passengers had disposed themselves in patience about the deck, he marched up and down, as did several of the others, and, while avoiding to look like one in search, sought diligently the remembered face of his cousin.

It was a cheerless gray day. The sea was quiet; the boat pitched but slightly. He was not long unsuccessful; when he had satis-

fied himself that she was not in the crowd on the windside, he went to lee and saw her sitting almost alone. She might have gone there for warmth. She did not seem to notice that cinders and fine soot were raining down upon her. He found himself disinclined to accost her at once; he went to lean where he could watch her without pointed appearance of curiosity.

She looked mournful in her black things—not the new, crisp crape of well-to-do bereavement, but a poor gentlewoman's ordinary shabby black. Her cheeks had lost their pretty roundness; the effect of her eyes was more than ever melancholy. The pale little face, set in its faint-colored hair, framed in its black bonnet, might pass a hundred times unnoticed: it had little to arrest the attention; but attention, by whatever chance once secured, must be followed by a gentle, compassionate interest in the breast of the beholder. This emotion felt Gregory.

She sat on one of the ship's benches, hugging her black wrap about her, hiding in it her little gloveless hands. A bundle was on

her lap, at her feet a large bag. She looked wearily off over the crumpled leaden plain, and now and then called: "Dorastus! Dorastus!"

At that, a toddling bundle came towards her, never near enough to be caught, and toddled off again, coming and going busily, with muttered baby soliloquy. He was a comical little figure, clumsily muffled against the cold, with a pointed knit cap drawn well down over his ears. If he ignored her call, she rose and fetched him, shaking his little hand and bidding him not to go again so far from mother. He dragged at his arm, squealing the while she exhorted, and almost tumbled over when she let him loose. Then he resumed his interrupted play.

After a time he seemed to tire of it. He came to his mother and, touching the bag at her feet, unintelligibly demanded something. She shook her head. He seemed to repeat his demand. "No, no, Dorastus — mother can't!" she said, fretfully. Then this dot of humanity made himself formidable. Gregory watched in surprise the little imperious face

become disquietingly like an angry man's. He hammered with both small fists on his mother's knee, and stamped and loudly sputtered. She caught his arms for a moment and held them quiet; mother and child looked each other in the face, his strange, unbabyish, heavy-browed eyes flaming, hers lit with a low smouldering resentment. He struggled from her grasp, and at last, as his conduct was beginning to attract attention, she stooped, vanquished, and, bruising her fingers on the awkward buckles, undid the bag.

Gregory at this point approached and spoke to her by name. She lifted her face, her eyes full of helpless tears. She reddened faintly on recognizing him. She handed the boy a diminutive toy-fiddle from the bag. Pacified, he retired at a little distance and, while his mamma and the gentleman entered into conversation, scraped seriously, the tassel on the tip of his cap bobbing with his funny little *airs de tête.*

"How good of you, how good of you—how comforting to me!" she said, her forlorn

face softly brightening; "I was getting so tired of taking care of myself! I have never travelled alone, and—and I am so timid—"

How different seemed the old house to Emmie returning! She settled down in it with the sense of passionate contentment I can imagine in a dove restored to the cote after escaping the fowler's snare and the rage of wintry storms. How shut it was against the cold! how safe from arrogant men demanding money! Life in it now seemed to her one round of luxurious pleasures: one could sleep undisturbed, tea and buttered bread came as regularly as the desire for them; flowers bloomed at every season on mantel-shelf and table; the grate glowed as if to glow were no more than a grate's nature. There was undeniably the domestic tyrant still; but what a mild one by comparison! Aunt Lucretia might be peremptory and critical and contradictory: to Emmie in these days she personated a benevolent Providence. It is possible that the lady's disposition had softened towards her niece: her superior daughters were removed, and the little widow

with her manifold experiences was unquestionably a person more interesting to have about than the moping girl of yore.

The two ladies, sitting together with their wools, in undertones talked over Emmie's married miseries. She was as ready with her confidences as Aunt Lucretia with her listening ear. There seemed no end to what she had to tell or the number of times she might relate the same incident and be heard out with tolerance. She was glad of some one to whom to unburden her heart of its accumulated grievance; she could not but be a little glad, too, now it was well over, that so much that was unusual had happened to her, since it lent her this importance. Aunt Lucretia gave a great deal of good advice—said what she would have done in like case; Emmie accepted it with as much humble gratitude as if it had still been of service. She concurred with all her heart in her aunt's unqualified condemnation of her first lapse from the respectable path—her elopement; she declared with perfect sincerity that she was puzzled to explain how it all happened—certainly before

a week had been over the folly of it had stared her in the face.

The young widow, when she had taken her aunt through scenes of rage and jealousy that made that matron's nostrils open as a war-horse's, and had shown up the petty tyrannies and meannesses of a bad-tempered, vindictive, vain man, afflicted with a set of morbidly tense nerves, would sometimes inconsistently betray a sort of pride in the fact that she had been adored by this erratic being, whose ill-treatment of her came partly from that fact; also a certain pride in the assurance she had had on every side, of his being a great artist who might have risen to fortune had he been blessed with a different constitution. A prince had once, in token of his appreciation, bestowed on him a jewelled order; Emmie wished she had not been forced to sell it when he was ill. She herself could not judge of his playing — she could not abide the sound of a violin—but the star might be accounted a proof of his ability.

"You were too meek, my dear," said

Lucretia, conclusively, after a tale of oppression; "I should have taken a stand."

"Dear aunt," said Emmie, pensively considering her relative's size and the cast of her features, "I think you would. He would have been afraid of you. If I displeased him, he said I was rebellious because I felt myself bolstered up by the admiration of whoever in the inn had happened to give me a passing glance, and he would torment me until I swore I loved him with every thought of my life. Sometimes, when he had made me cry, he would cry, too—I hate that in a man, aunt!—and go on tormenting me until I said I forgave him—"

"Ah, I should have taught him a lesson!"

"Yes, aunt, you would. But I swore whatever he pleased. If I was sulky, he was as likely as not to sit up all night, wailing on his violin when I wanted to sleep. He always took remote chambers at inns, for the privilege of playing at night, if he pleased. If I complained, he said that if I had liked the music it would have soothed me to sleep, and if I did not like it it was well I should be

kept awake. He was very sore on the point of my not being in love with his music."

"I should like to see a man play the fiddle in my bedroom!" said Aunt Lucretia, with a face of danger.

And Emmie, from this lady's example and counsel, got a retrospective courage that enabled her in memory, now that she was well-fed, well-dressed, and possessed of the assurance that goes with those conditions, to bring the stormy scenes with her husband to an end more honorable to herself. She could imagine herself even braving him — when, perhaps, would come in sight Dorastus. Then her heart would sink in consciousness of its folly. There was no contending for her with a nature like that. That baby could bend her to his will even as the father had done. He was so little now that she could not strive with him to any enduring advantage; and when he would be bigger, she felt it already, no revolt of hers would be of use. The tyranny was handed down from father to son, with the sensitiveness and the jealousy. She look-

ed over at the little, intrepid face sometimes with a sort of slave's aversion: every day he would be more like that other; he kept him disagreeably alive now in her memory with the tricks of his face, the difficulties of his temper. She only hoped, in an unformed way as yet, that before he grew to make himself heavily felt something might have arisen for her protection.

She made him pretty things with a mother's full indulgence, caressed him in due measure, and gave dutiful attention to his every request; but deep in her heart and in her eye was a reservation. And in him, though he could hardly frame speech, seemed an inherited suspicion of this want of loyalty in her, a consciousness of her appeal to something outside, against him. In his baby rages he seemed aware, by an instinct beyond his understanding, that she did not care for them, except that they made her uncomfortable, and he beat her with all his fierce little strength for it. She belonged strictly to him, and there was always treachery in the air; so he must be foes with all surrounding her, and

most severe with herself, whom he idolatrously loved.

Often, if they were alone and she did nothing to cross him, but treated respectfully his every whim, he rewarded her gravely with such tokens of his devotion as he could devise. If they were out under the trees, he would make a hundred little voyages and from each bring back some treasure, flower or pebble, that he dropped in her lap, watching her face to see if she were appropriately pleased. If she were busy with her stitching and after a time forgot to acknowledge his gift, he would make known his disgust by taking everything from her and stamping it under foot; but if she wisely kept her whole mind on him, and gave him praise and smiles, and admired his offerings, he would multiply his efforts to please her, get her things the most difficult and perilous to obtain, stones that were heavy, insects that were frightful, parade before her every little accomplishment, be débonnaire and royal, and expose his true worshipping heart to his servant.

Woe if in such moments of expansion

Gregory came out on the lawn and took the empty seat on the rustic bench beside Emmie! The child would know nothing of a divided allegiance, and showed his sense of outrage by a prompt attack on both, whom he seemed to think equally conspirators against his peace. They stood his babbled vituperation and baby blows with smiling patience for a little, trying to converse coherently under them; then, when he burst into angry tears, with a sigh the mother bore him off to be lectured and calmed, resuming her conversation with Gregory at a more opportune moment. Before Gregory she never spoke of her husband.

With the passing months her cheek got back its freshness, her eye its clear brightness. Now a haunting fear awoke in her breast: Aunt Lucretia was wearying of her presence. She had heard all of her injuries till the story was stale. She was beginning to find fault with her just as of old, to set her back in her place now and then with the former terrible abruptness, and that place a very low one. The poor little

woman accepted all abjectly, shuddering at the possibility of being again cast on the world with her child. She went about with reddened eyelids and a look of pathetic nervousness, hushing Dorastus whenever he lifted his voice, doing her pitiful best that neither should give offence. Gregory could not look on in patience: he laid the gentle afflicted creature's tremors forever by asking her to become his wife.

His mother left the house and went to abide with her daughters. But in time she became reconciled to what was unalterable and returned to her ancient seat of government, allowing her age to be cheered by the sight of her favorite child's happiness. Little sons and daughters, his wife gave him four, among whom prevailed straw-colored hair and eyes of the admired flower tint. The old house was gay as at early dawn a tree full of gossiping birds.

So to Emmie was raised a mighty salvation; against Dorastus arrayed themselves innocent yellow heads, like so many insuperable golden lances.

When the children were called into the drawing-room to be shown to the company, a visitor was sure to ask, "And who is this little man?" meaning Dorastus; so unlikely did it appear that he could be of his mother's kindred. To the golden hen, her golden brood. How in seriousness call a chick the little black creature with the large beak and the piercing eyes?

And as unlike his brothers as he was physically, so unlike he remained in disposition. By all the children as by Dorastus himself the difference in kind was felt. He remained solitary among them and at odds with all. They set him down a domineering, bad-tempered thing, and he summed them up scornfully as a pack of pudding-heads. It was not plain to any one why he thought himself superior: his actual accomplishments were somewhat less than ordinary. Bullet-headed, downright Hector, his brother nearest in age, could beat him at any sport, and when their differences brought them to blows was rather more than half sure of victory over his senior, inferior to

him in size and art; Martin was cleverer than he at his books; the little girls even could give him points in conduct—yet his attitude of every minute insisted upon it that he was better than any of them, and that his mother was more particularly his mother than she was theirs. Emmie, it is true, did not reprove him quite as she did Hector; he was allowed more than the others the full swing of his temperament. His step-father punctiliously refrained from meddling with him, and if he made trouble with his temper and his pride Emmie warned her nice-natured children not to irritate him, to make allowances for him. Insensibly that qualified the relation between Dorastus and his mother. That negative indulgence he felt, however dimly, did not prove him a favorite: it made him a sort of alien. He became more reserved in his demands upon his mother. There were too many yellow heads for one boy to contend with successfully by ordinary means. He still held to it bravely in his attitude towards his brothers and sisters that he was better than they, and that his mother belonged ex-

clusively to him, but herself he troubled less and less with his jealousy and his claims. It might have seemed at last almost as if she were become indifferent to him. Absorbed by her domestic cares, she had scarcely perceived the change.

The cares were many, but pleasant in their nature. Gregory was steadily, lazily kind, the children were healthy, she herself was in the beautiful full bloom of life—she found it good. She had almost forgotten the bitter taste of her beginnings, when one night, startled from a deep sleep, she lay in the dark awhile and wondered that she should dream so clearly of hearing the long, low wail of a violin. It had recreated about her in an instant the atmosphere of old days. She lay as she had lain often enough, with lead upon her heart, a dead sense of there being no escape in view from this slavery, this poverty, this succession of weary travel and third-rate inns, this nerve-racking sound of the violin penetrating through the brain as a red-hot needle — no release from this unrelenting master, this terrible added burden of baby.

She shook herself free from what she thought the remaining effect of a nightmare; she had seemed for a moment to smell the very essence her first husband used on his hair, mixed with the flat odor of the small Dutch inn-chamber in which Dorastus was born. She turned over on her side to sleep again, when she became assured that she heard a violin. She listened through her thick heart-beats, a thrill of superstitious horror stiffening her skin. She knew it unreasonable, but could not dispel her fear. She rose sitting in bed, becoming at last fully awake. Still she heard the violin, sounding faintly, as if from some distant part of the house. Then she thought. It had been these long years in the garret, the treasured Amati he had made her swear to keep for his child. The child had found it.

She could not fall to sleep again, she must satisfy herself.

She slipped her feet into their shoes, got her dressing-gown about her, and crept through the shadowy corridor, up the stair, to where Dorastus slept. Since he would be

the master, whoever shared his room, which was obviously unfair to his room-mate, he had been allotted a little chamber by himself in a somewhat remote part of the house.

As she approached it, the sound of the violin came more and more clear to her. She stopped and leaned against the balusters, yielding to a soul-sickness that had its rise in she scarce knew which, memory or foreboding. She listened curiously. It was strange playing, though simple, subdued to not wound the night silence; unordinary as it was, there was nothing tentative about it, the hands seemed going to it with a fine boldness, a delicate natural skill. The mother felt not a moment's joy.

She came to the door, opened it noiselessly, and stood in the doorway with her candle shining upward in her wide eyes, her solemn face.

Dorastus stopped playing, and said, with a gleeful, short laugh, "I knew it would make you come!"

As Emmie had expected, he held the Amati. He had thrown off his jacket and

tie and stood in his shirt-sleeves, with his neck bare. His dark eyes were burning and dancing; his black hair was ruffled and pushed up on end; his face was hotly flushed. His whole attitude had in it something new, finely expressive of conscious power.

"I knew it would make you come!" he said, with a triumphant nod.

She entered and set down her light on the little chest of drawers. "You ought not to play at night," she said, faintly. "It disturbs people's sleep."

"It wouldn't wake *them!*" he exclaimed, scornfully, "and if it did I shouldn't care, as long as they didn't come and bother. I wanted to call you, to make you come to me. I was sure I could. Are you cold, little mother dear? Get into my bed."

He laid down his instrument; he came where she stood, with her silken hair tumbling over her shoulders, and felt her chilled hands.

"No, no," she said, irritably, taking them from him, "it is unheard of, playing at this

hour of the night. I must go." But she went mechanically to sit on the edge of his bed, that had not been lain in that night, and still kept towards him that wondering, dismayed face.

"How did it sound?" asked the boy, whose excitement seemed to dull his perception, so that he remained unchilled by her want of warmth. "Did it say plainly, Arise, wrap your sky-blue gown about you, never mind tying up your gold hair, light your light, and come gliding through the shadow of the sleeping house, to your dear son, the only one who loves you, in his solitary room, far from all the others? That is what I meant it should say, but towards the end I meant it to say something else, towards the end it was explaining. Did you understand that part?"

"How did you find it?" asked Emmie, still in her faint voice. "Why did you take it without asking our permission? Who taught you to play on it?"

The boy laughed again his gleeful laugh. He got on to the bed beside her and sat

with his chin in his hand, his glowing face full of pride in himself. "Ah, how I found it, when it was up in the garret? It was like that story of the Greek fellow—what's his name?—dressed like a girl. When the peddler brought shawls and ribbons and things, and a sword hidden among them, he took the sword, and the peddler knew by that sign that he was a man. In the garret there were old hoop-skirts, and broken mouse-traps, and bird-cages, and boxes full of religious books and things—but my hand went straight to the violin!"

"Tell me the truth, Dorastus," spoke his mother, wearily.

"Well, then, after talking with a certain person, I concluded that it must be there. I looked for it and found it, months and months ago. I took it and learned to play, to give you a surprise. Do you think I can ever play as my father did?"

"Whom have you heard speak of your father's playing, Dorastus?"

"Aha! There is some one who remembers him at this very place—who heard him

just once and never forgot it. I might as well tell you: it is the brother of the inn-keeper's wife at Colthorpe; he used to be the hostler, but is too old now. He plays the violin himself, at weddings, sometimes, and dances—but not much, dear. He taught me, but I have gone far ahead—oh, far ahead of him now! He knows when it is good, however, and you should hear what he says of me and my playing. You must see him and ask him. He had climbed up from outside into the window when once my father played at Colthorpe, and he can speak of it as if it had happened yesterday. (He says that I am very like my father, that any one would know me who had seen him. He knew, before asking, whose son I was. Only, my father wore his hair long; well, I will wear my hair long!) He says that, as he played, every trouble he had ever had came back to him, even the death of a dog, and he could not help crying—but he liked it; he enjoyed feeling bad. And he says that it made him see plain before him, but not very plain either, a lot of things he

had only heard folks talk about—the shepherds in the East, for instance, with the angels singing good-will in a hole in the clouds. And he knew for sure, he says, how it would have felt if the girl he wanted hadn't married some one else and gone to live away, but had taken him. I asked him, the other day, if I could make him feel those things. He said, 'Not yet, not quite yet;' but he thought I was beginning. He has a number of music sheets; I can read the notes much quicker than he already, though he taught me. But I don't care for those; there must be others much better than those! Those are nothing! I like better what I make up myself than I do those. Did you notice—but no, you must have been too far —how quickly I can play some passages? My left fingers go like a spider, and it is so easy for them! Giles says my hand is like my father's—he remembers it—a true violinist's hand. I feel that it can do anything, dear—anything! And I mean that it shall do such things! Look at it, mother!" and he held up the thin, unboyishly delicate,

angular hand, stronger in appearance than the rest of his body. "Is it like my father's? You are the one, of course, that remembers best. Is it like my father's?"

"Oh, yes—yes!" she almost moaned.

He did not seem to perceive her impatience, but contemplated his own hand a little while, calmly sure that he must be an object of pride to her now. "It is quite unlike Hector's, at least. I should like to see him try to play with his pink paws!"

"He might not be able to play," said Emmie, "but he will, I dare say, do something quite as useful."

"There is nothing quite so useful!" cried the boy superbly, and laughed again in his perverse glee. "It is more useful than anything you can invent to say that Hector is going to do. Hector! Hector will be a rabbit-raiser; he likes rabbits better than anything. But I will come with my violin and make the rabbits stand up on their hind-legs and stare; I will play softly, wheedlingly, going slowly backwards towards the woods, and they will all come after me, without stop-

ping for a nibble. I will lead them away, away, all the flock of little, round-backed, skipping things—just as I made you get out of bed and come up here."

"I came to tell you to stop, foolish boy. I didn't want you to wake the others. It was very inconsiderate in you—very inconsiderate. And I am not sure that I am pleased with you for taking a thing so valuable—it is worth a great deal of money—unknown to me, or for doing things in secret, or for having dealings with people I know nothing of—hostlers and inn-keepers' wives. You certainly play nicely—"

"Ah, did you truly think I did, mother?" he asked, eagerly. "You ought to know; you used to hear himself. Now, tell me, dear—"

"But I am not at all sure"—she interrupted him, lamely querulous—"that the violin— You have been so underhanded, and I see now how you waste your time—it explains your being so bad with your lessons. I am not at all sure that the violin ought not to be taken from you."

"I shall not give it up!" Dorastus said

instantly, and it might be perfectly understood that he would struggle with his last breath to keep it, doing as much damage as in him lay to his opposers.

Emmie, quite pale, looked into his face, that had fully returned from its mood of happy pride, and he looked into hers, as they had looked already when he was but a baby. Then, seeing what she had always seen, she tossed up her hands with a little helpless, womanish motion, and complained: "Oh, I am so cold, and I feel so ill! It is like a horrid dream—and I am miserable." She rose and pulled her things about her to go, tears shining on her cheek.

Dorastus, who had leaped up and laid his hand resolutely on his violin and bow, if they should be in any immediate danger, watched her with a strange face. His jaw was iron. When, as she reached the door, he unclinched his teeth to speak, his face worked in spite of him and tears gushed from his eyes. "You never understand anything!" he exploded, in a harsh, angry voice all his pride could not keep from breaking. Then, with

the indignant scorn of a child for a grown-up person who seems to him out of all nature dull—"Go!" he said, beating his arms violently about, "Go! Go!"

So Dorastus retained the violin, and defiantly played on it, in and out of season. His mother's failure to be pleased with his playing seemed to have cut her off, in his estimation, from all right to an opinion. It is true that after the first night she armed herself with patience towards a situation she could not change. She did not cross the boy more than her conscience positively enjoined; he might play since he pleased, but must not neglect his studies in pursuit of a vain pastime.

In spite of her, his studies suffered. He felt no humiliation now that Hector or any should be ahead of him with books; he could have been far ahead of them if he had chosen, but they could under no circumstance have done what he did. Of these things he was proudly convinced, and he declared them without hesitation. His almost untutored playing took on a strange audacity, a fantas-

tical quality that made it pleasing to none in the household. That did not disturb him; he pursued triumphantly in the direction repugnant to them, taking their disapproval to naturally point to its excellence. Sometimes, half in scorn, he would play for the little girls the simple melodies they knew, to show them that he could do that, too, if he chose; full tenderly could he play them and delight their gentle hearts, but he preferred, if he could catch an unprejudiced soul for audience, a housemaid for instance, to set her opposite to him and play to her from his head, then question her as to what the music had made her think of, helping her to detail her impressions, expressing his contempt freely if the music had not had on her the desired effect, but hugging her if she happened to answer as he wanted.

Whenever he had a holiday, or took one, he disappeared with his instrument, returning with a conqueror's mien, out of place in a boy with whom every one is displeased, and who has had nothing to eat. It was felt by all how he was in these days not friends with

anybody, nor anybody friends with him. It suited his pride to carry off the situation as if he had been a king among boors.

Her eldest child's conduct began at last to be something of a grievance to Emmie. She appealed to no one for help to reduce him to obedience. She would not have dared do that; an intimate sense forbade it, a scruple which would have had no voice, perhaps, had she loved him more. She excused and upheld him in her little wars with Lucretia, and respected Gregory's reluctance to interfere with him, founded in justice on the consciousness of a deep-seated, invincible dislike; but she fretted under his undutifulness and only refrained from satisfying the desire to attempt asserting her power over him, though it should be futile as ever, in the idea that, at the worst, he would soon be leaving home, with Hector, for school, when the detested violin must be given up and stronger hands than her own find a way to bend his obstinate spirit. At the same time, in a corner of her heart, she felt unreasonably, unaccountably hurt, as perhaps she would have felt if

Dorastus's father had suddenly ceased from his persecutions and she had known by that sign that, worm as he was, he had ceased to care for her.

"This is all very well; but when you get to school—" Phrases begun on that line became frequent in Dorastus's ear as the time approached. He heard them with a singularly bright eye.

The two boys set out for school together, under the guardianship of the tutor. Consternation fell on the family when it was known that Dorastus had been missed on the way. The boy was traced to London; there he was easily lost among the millions of its inhabitants.

While the question was in discussion whether it behooved Gregory himself to travel to London and institute a search for the runaway, came a letter from the boy, making it easily decent for his step-father to leave the stinging weed to get its growth where it might without being a nuisance, and reconciling his mother to letting him take his chances as he pleased, since he was so sure

they were brilliant — very brilliant, those chances.

His certainty of himself, his enthusiasm, were such that gradually they communicated themselves in a degree to her. Why not? After all, his father, they had said, was a great man; princes had honored him. An involuntary respect crept through her for Dorastus's daring. It seemed advisable at least to give him the opportunity he wanted; the more that the process of finding him, bringing him back in what to him would seem ignominy, and thereafter keeping watch over him, was uncomfortable to think of.

His letter was to his mother, a mixture of boyishness and manliness, more frank than any speech she had had from him in a long time. It vaguely stirred her heart; for it seemed to restore to her something that possessing she had not prized, but, careful economist, did not like to think lost.

"You must promise that I shall not be troubled by any attempt to get me back. I will do anything terrible if I am trapped. Don't you see that I couldn't go to school

with Hector, who is younger? We should be put in classes together, for a while at least, and I couldn't stand it. Besides, I haven't the time, I have so much to do! Besides, I couldn't go on living with *those people* forever. I don't mean that you shall, either. I won't tell you all now, but after a time you may know that there is to be a house much better than theirs for you to live in, with me. You shall have everything much better. But I will not tell you more. Only, you can be perfectly sure of it. You will not think that I came away without caring about leaving you. I was afraid you would guess something if I hugged you before them as I wanted to, but I had been to your room in the night, and any of your gowns you put on is full of your son's kisses. If I thought you would show this letter, I think that I should never in my life write you again. If you should send me any money, I should return it at once or destroy it, so please don't do it, it would make me angry. I know that we had nothing when we came to their house, except the violin. One of the servants told

me how we came. What do you suppose keeping me all these years has cost? When I can, I mean to give them double; you can tell him so, if you choose. I can't now, but what I can do is to take nothing more from them. You need not be anxious about me. I am prepared, because I have long known what I meant to do, and I can take care of myself. I have met several persons already who know of my father; it seems to be something here to be his son, though not at home, except to one man, and he a hostler. Well, I will show them—you, too, dear mother. I don't mean to vex or grieve you, mother, dear. If I have vexed you, I know I shall make you forgive me some day, before long, perhaps, when I shall have made you understand. You can write me at the Tartar's Head, but if you hunted me there, or information concerning me, you would never find me, I vow."

Other letters came from time to time, written in fine spirits always, referring, but mysteriously, to fine successes. Emmie felt a certain modesty about these letters. She

communicated what was in them with reserve, and adopted towards inquirers the tone of discretion that the letters had with herself. But she found herself often brooding over the contents. They charmed the imagination; they sounded like things one read. It was so remarkable, this circumstance of a poor boy, a boy of her own, arriving in a great city, with little but his violin, and by sounds merely forcing the things one values to come to him, as he had spoken fancifully once, she remembered, of making a flock of rabbits follow him into the woods. He wrote little very definite, but dropped telling hints of how he had played before this great man and that man of importance, and this one had said—the other had promised. He had been called upon to perform at a certain levee, and out of his fee had bought the things he was sending; he had money to spare. And there came a parcel of presents for Emmie and the little girls, by which all were greatly impressed. Dorastus's rank in the memory of his family rose a degree. Now, on looking back, each knew that he had always foreseen how,

with that powerful will, Dorastus must be able to hew his way through difficulties and compel circumstances to serve him. He was looked on rather as a man than a boy, even as he looked on himself. His mother was grateful to him for seeming to efface the weak foolishness out of her first marriage: she was justified in her latter days, and proved a virgin full of good sense. She wrote Dorastus encouraging letters. Her good words got glowing answers: surely it would not be long; he was working with all his might. But they must be patient, for success as a material recompense was slow; and he hinted with the effect of a sigh at rivalries, at the density of the public mind. Yet talent must inevitably triumph in the end and manly effort meet its reward.

When Hector came home for his holidays he found it just a little stupid to have been a good boy. The personage in the general mind seemed to be his undisciplined half-brother. He contrived, however, in the course of weeks, to fix a good deal of attention on himself. He restored the balance to

his mother's mind. Dorastus sank into his natural place in relation to her other children. She waited in serene patience — sometimes with a passing touch of scepticism, the reflection of some outsider's attitude, oftener with childish perfection of faith—for the developments he announced in letters somewhat decreasing in frequency, but preserving their early tone of hopefulness.

So time passed. The unusual became the usual and lost consideration, according to its habit.

Then the sisters-in-law, those perfect daughters, mothers, and wives, came to visit the head of the house in the home of their girlhood. They brought maids and children and chattels manifold.

Now these ladies had been in London, and Emmie heard much from them of the glories and greatness of that city; she had long opportunity to learn respect for their manners and gowns, which alike came from there. They had not happened upon Dorastus; they could not remember hearing of him, and as that seemed to make it plain to Emmie they

had not been in the most polite places, they explained that the city was so large and populous you might not come across a person in a lifetime.

They left on a rainy autumn morning. Emmie, with her forehead against the glass, watched their carriages dwindling, dwindling. Gone, with all their patterns for gowns, with the last sweet thing in worsted-work; gone, with their fashionable conversation, the art of which she had not had quite time yet to master. But even if she had become perfect in all, as they, of what use could it have been to her here? she asked, turning from the dripping window-pane.

She moved with an air of being the moon by day. The sickness of the decaying year seemed to have got into her blood; she felt as if she herself were the perishing summer, which had somehow been wasted. She said over her children's ages with a sort of terror, a sense of time having stolen a march on her; she was vaguely panic-stricken to think there was so little of the good time of life left before her. She sought the mirror to divert

her mind with trying on again the bonnet the sisters had bestowed on her, pronouncing it so becoming. Under the severe gray light the face she saw reflected held more than ever to her discontented eyes a forecast of the cheerless coming days when the rose should be withered, the gold gone. The deadly quiet of the country, the silence of the well-regulated house, suddenly seemed to her an outrage, a roof incontrovertible that no one cared what happened to her. Gregory in particular did not care. Else would he not have comprehended that movement and novelty and gayety alone could at this pass save her from the insidious oncreeping evil that encouraged hard lines between the pale cheek and the drooping mouth? Clearly he did not care. He cared for nothing but not to be disturbed after dinner. In this connection she thought over many a subtle wrong she had been putting up with for years. She thought of Dorastus, from whom this husband, with his royal indifference, allowed her to be so long separated; Dorastus, who as she looked to

him, turning from the lukewarm, apathetic tribe surrounding her, seemed an embodiment of swiftness and strength, a tempered steel blade to rely on, a flame at which to warm the numb hands of the heart. Ah, well, he was making a home for her with him, yonder in the living city. She lost sight of the mirror into which she was staring; she saw that home. Suddenly it seemed to her she could not live longer without seeing her boy. She rose with the energy of true inspiration. It was such an obviously legitimate desire, this desire to behold again her own flesh and blood, that she need not be at pains to fabricate palliation or excuse for it. She sought Gregory directly. She was weary and ill, she had dreams at night, he did not know how hard her life had become. She wanted to see Dorastus.

Gregory yielded.

They came to London. They took rooms at a quiet hotel known to him of old.

The novelty of all, the anticipation, made Emmie feel young again. Her violet eyes were still childishly clear, her hair was pretty

still; little was missed of the beauty of her youth but its slender lightness.

"No, no; you must leave it all to me," she said, when Gregory would have accompanied her in her search for Dorastus. "I have a clue which I will not betray. He has shown, dear fellow, that he might be trusted to take care of himself. I will bring him home to dine with us. You may take seats for the pantomime."

So the good Gregory put her in the care of a trusted driver, and saw her started on her adventure.

Now she was driven — it seemed to her they were hours on the way—to the Tartar's Head, a coffee-house of not very imposing appearance, in a crowded part.

Before reaching her destination she almost wished she had let Gregory come: it was so noisy; the air was so dingy it deadened one's spirits despite wealth of delightful prospects; and she must face various unknown, perhaps unfriendly, faces before finding his face—after which all would be well.

She descended from the carriage with a

little flutter, then with the haste of rout got into it again, and requested the driver to bring some one to her, as if she had been a great person.

A young man came out to take her commands, a well-oiled young man in side-whiskers and a broad shirt-front.

Had not letters been received there addressed to so-and-so?

The young man was more than polite. Inquiries were made. Such letters had been received. The person to whom they were addressed called for them.

"I am his mother," said Emmie, lamely, for she had prepared another course than this simple one, a course involving strategy. "Does he not live here? Where does he live?"

The young man continued very obliging. He made further inquiries and came back looking a little blank. The person came himself and left no direction for forwarding his letters; a letter had once been waiting several weeks.

"Does no one here know him?" asked his

mother, nearly in tears. Of a sudden this city seemed to her terribly large, and terribly full of people who cared nothing for any distress of hers. "He plays on the violin—he plays very beautifully on the violin."

A possibility of intelligence dawned in the obliging young man's face, and he ran indoors again. He came back with a hopeful air. "Yes, your ladyship. There is an old man belonging to the place knows him. He took him a letter once when he couldn't come himself, being laid up. He didn't want to tell at first, saying how he'd sworn. But I let him know your ladyship was the young man's mother, and he told. It's a bit far."

The waiter stepped up to the coachman and gave him instructions. Emmie rewarded his obligingness with bounty in proportion to her relief at all proving so easy. Of course some one knew him. It was part of his boyishness to suppose he could hide, after his light had begun shining through the bushel, too.

She looked out through the misty pane

at the bright passing shop-windows; there seemed to her thousands in a row, and hundreds of carriages rolling along with her. She liked the city again exceedingly, and was glad to hope she might be there often after a time; it was so various, it put life into one. If only the murky cloud would lift that rested on the chimney-tops, and the rain stop making more the gray slime on the flags.

It was a long distance. She looked out until she was tired and confused; then leaned back and meditated pleasantly for a time, then looked out again, with a little shock of disappointment at seeing no more bright windows.

They were going more slowly; the streets here were narrow, the air seemed dingier, the houses and people looked miserable.

She watched with a saddened interest these that she fixed upon as the poor city-people in their poor quarters. She was sorry for them, but she would be relieved when they were left behind for the gayer thoroughfares, or the roomier, more cheerful suburbs.

Now at the entrance of a narrow court the carriage stopped. She wondered what could be hindering its progress, and fidgeted while the coachman left his box and came to the door. He opened it with a stolid face and held his finger to his hat, waiting for her to alight.

"But—but"—she stammered, eying the poverty-stricken appearance of the place, "this cannot be it!"

"The directions were clear, ma'am; I've followed them," said the man, with respectful firmness. "This is as near as I can get to the house; there's no room to turn around in the court."

Emmie leaned back a moment, determined not to stir from her cushions—the mistake was on the face of it too stupid.

The coachman stood waiting, a man of patience carved in wood. Emmie eyed him helplessly; then, seeing that the imposing creature would be satisfied with no less from her, with the abruptness of impatience she alighted,and rustled into the dark court, peering upward for the number.

There it was. She knocked, and listened,

with a heart in which strange things seemed to be happening. To the capless woman who opened she stammered a name, looking for the relief of being told instantly that none of that name lived there.

"Three pair back, ma'am," said the woman, who appeared like a cook, actual, past, or potential. "But he's not in. There's no telling how soon he will come. What name did you say? Drastus what? Sibbie-mole? Oh no, ma'am. Beg pardon. I listened as far as Drastus, and answered because it's such a curious name. Ours name is Fenton. But, let's see. What manner of young man might yours be? Like a foreigner, with a large nose and black eyes, and plays the fiddle, and wears his hair long? Dear me, ma'am, the very same! His room's three pair back. You wish to wait for him? This way, then, ma'am."

Emmie, in whom all processes of thought had stopped in amazement, followed the landlady as best she could up three flights of dark stairs, and entered through the door flung open for her.

They stood in a little room that received the day through a sky-light. Emmie dropped, sitting on the edge of the narrow bed and knotted her little gloved fingers together in silence. She was so pale that the landlady felt alarmed and asked if she were feeling ill. She shook her head, and continued looking about fearfully and in wonder.

There was little to see, nothing that might not have belonged to any one in the wide world as well as to that boy; not one of these sordid appurtenances reminded her of him, except the music on the table—but any fiddler might have just such music.

She rose to her feet as if jerked by a hidden string, and walked stiffly towards the door, saying, "It is evidently not the one. This one's name is Drastus Fenton, you say. The one I seek is Dorastus Sibbemol. Good-morning, ma'am."

But near the door she stopped, her eyes widening upon an object set upright in the corner—a black wooden box, very old, scarred and worm-eaten, mournfully resembling a child's coffin.

She went back to the bed, and limply leaned against the wall. She stared over at the box, with its peculiar wrought-iron hinges and handle.

"Has he been here long?" she asked, faintly, at last, of the blowzy woman who was looking at her with some concern, and at the same time, in view of the lady's respectability, trying to smooth down her untidy hair.

She thought a moment and judged he might have been there half a year.

Emmie wrung her hands in an aimless way. She felt little of pain as yet, or indignation; only vague throes and convulsions of change, a working of all the atoms in heart and brain trying to adjust themselves to something new.

"And he is poor!" she murmured.

"Well," said the landlady, exculpatingly, "we are all poor folks here, ma'am. He mostly pays his rent — I don't ask much, but when he's behind I'm not hard on him. He's a good lad," she went on, and as she was a sizable woman, after a gesture of deferential apology she took a seat, to support her

in her view of lingering to angle with information until she caught a little enlightenment. "A good lad, but that proud! He thinks he'll be as rich as a dook some day, with his little fiddle!" She shook her head in compassion and chuckled fatly over a household joke of long standing. "He's all right in his head, ma'am, except on that point. A poor lad that plays in the streets is none so likely to pick up a fortune. And such tunes as he plays! I've always been told I'd an uncommon ear for a catch, but to catch head or tail of them is beyond me!"

"He plays in the streets!"

"Yes, poor Dook—come rain, come shine. Sometimes he has a good day, sometimes a bad one; but times is hard—it's not very good at best. He's not one of them pretty-impudent Italian boys with wheedling brown velvet eyes. He looks too scornful, and despises folks more than is for his own good. I have felt hurt at it myself, ma'am, and I may say I'm not touchy. When I've known that he was a bit hard up and he looked hollow, and I've asked him in neighborly to have a bite

with us, he has answered me almost as if he hated me for it—and gone hollow."

His mother drew in her breath sharply.

"Might you be a friend of his?" asked the landlady. "Once when he was sick abed, and I came up to say a good word, he got sociabler than usual, and spoke of a lady, a lady of quality, who'd heard him play—I thought likely it was before he came here with his coat so seedy—a lady who thought he was very fine. Perhaps I don't understand about fiddle-playing, and he is all he says. Might you be the lady?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" said Emmie, scarcely knowing what she said.

The landlady looked much interested. "Well, now, I thought as much, for I don't think he's any one in the world belonging to him. He's a good lad, ma'am," she said again, with a good-natured impulse to make hay for a fellow-creature while this, possibly a sun, was shining. "He deserves better than he gets, if I do say it. He works at them music-books for hours sometimes, at night, till the man below is fit to go mad.

But I tell him I can't put out a lodger that pays more frequent than he, and when I speak to Drastus he says he'll leave, though he should have to sleep on the pavement—he must play when he pleases. He says that it's because he can't play as other fiddlemen do, from a book and in a particular way, that he can't get nothing to do but play in the streets. So he must learn, and learn he will, and he scrapes away like a meeting of cats on the roof. I'm sorry he's out, ma'am. What did you want with him, now? Couldn't I give your message—or must you wait yourself?"

"I will wait—I will wait."

"He may not be home till night. He sometimes even—"

"Oh, leave me, my good woman!" moaned Emmie. "What else can I do but wait?"

And the landlady, taking pity on what seemed to her an inordinate perturbation of spirit, left the visitor to herself, returning now and then to listen, and bringing up once an inquiry from the coachman.

Emmie remained sitting on the edge of

the bed. After a time she rose and looked with pointless minuteness at everything in the room, opening every drawer and reading every paper. She found all her letters tied in a bundle and wrapped in a silk neckerchief of her own, old, and that she had never missed. He had few possessions, and they made the heart sick to pore over.

The light faded off the dull glass overhead. With chilled fingers she felt for the candle and lighted it. The landlady, coming up at dark, insisted on bringing her a cup of tea. The good creature had so disciplined her curiosity concerning the history implied in this gentlewoman's presence here that her delicacy now in endeavoring to discover was touching. Yet it went unrewarded. She stayed for the satisfaction of seeing the lady, who she thought looked fairly ill, refresh herself; and when it was delayed, tried by example to institute in the atmosphere that cheerfulness which is conducive to a better appetite—until asked again, with an imploring glance from eyes like a shot dove's, to go, for the sake of pity to go.

Emmie now took down the few clothes she had seen on the hooks, with a vague idea that they required mending. She spread them out over her lap one by one, and passed her hand mechanically over the threadbare places where the black was green, over certain fringes about the holes, her heart feeling extraordinarily large and empty and silent. The rings on her cold hand glittered in the stroking movement, four rich rings with various stones, Gregory's gifts. Four—but she had five children.

She stretched herself suddenly on the bed with her face in the old coat, the chill of the room slowly seizing upon her as she lay. She prayed in a distant, half-conscious way, without the least illusion that such words could persuade any one, for God to unmake everything that had happened to her, to let her have died, and Dorastus too, at his very birth; for them to have both been lying in the remote Dutch God's-acre these many years. For one fleeting moment memory gave back to her perfect an impression never before recalled. She seemed to have been roused

from a stupor deeper than sleep; her eyes dwelt without wonder on what she thought to be a cathedral, with colored windows ablaze —it dwindled, until it was a mere night-light glimmering. Then shadowy people placed a little bundle in her arms. She tingled as an instrument whose every string is touched, a coolness rippled from her head to her feet, she knew a state never known before or since, a sense of unlimited wealth, a tenderness ineffable, a trembling outgoing of all her being to this handful of life. She heaved a great, faint sigh, and with effort unspeakable bent till her lips were pressed as to a warm rose-leaf. She sank to sleep, weak unto death, but blissfully happy—waking stronger and in a different mood.

She wished she might not have waked, but been buried with her poor first baby in her arms, having ceased to be in the single moment wherein she completely loved it. Nothing that had happened to her since then seemed to her sweet; all was sicklied through by the consciousness of a crime gone before and daily confirmed, a woman's most mon-

strous, miserable crime—not loving enough. Nothing could make her withered, yellowed, cheapened life right now—she should have died at that moment. She said this over and over again to the powers that hear us, until all meaning had faded from it. She started, with a sense of something going out—she thought it must be the candle and she should be left in the dark. She sat up, frightened and freezing.

The candle was burning quietly. Then, as she scrutinized the shadows ahead, loath to stir, she became aware of her rings having grown loose, they were in danger of dropping off; of her clothes having grown loose, they let the cold in under them; she felt a prickling at the temples, as if it were the gray creeping through her hair; she felt her features becoming pinched and old, beauty dropping from them like a husk. She wanted to cry then with a childish self-pity, but no tears would come; she did not know how to start the flood that she longed for to relieve her. She felt that she could only have screamed.

She got up to rid herself of this congeal-

ment, and paced the room from corner to corner with sweeping black gown that told of the dusty things it had that day brushed.

Company had come to the man below; they were making a great deal of very jolly noise. The candle guttered drearily; a reek of warm cabbage climbed up the stairway to her nostrils. She looked up on hearing a soft tapping—the black sky-light was spattered with silver tears, like a pall.

She walked up and down, waiting and listening, everything taking more and more the quality of a dream wherein the most unnatural things grow ordinary. She had felt with a numbed sort of cowardly loathing that every moment brought her nearer to a black stream of realizing grief and remorse into which willy-nilly she must descend; but now it seemed in accordance with every known law that she should be here, destined to go on walking so forever, never arriving, nor anything ever changing. She heard herself say aloud in a light, indifferent tone, "He will never come. He will never come."

For a moment she remembered Gregory,

whose image seemed to rise out of the dim past: Gregory in the warm light of the hotel coffee-room, where dinner was set on a little table for three, dinner with wine-glasses of two shapes, and fruit and confectionery in crystal dishes. The thought worked upon her as a sweet smell in sea-sickness. All that had to do with Gregory seemed of negative importance; let him wait and wonder and worry. She felt hard-hearted towards him and all prosperous things.

A burst of voices reached her through the floor; they were rough and hoarse, their mirth had turned to wrangling. It was so horribly lonely here! If they were suddenly possessed to climb the stairs, to burst in upon her! There was a crash of glass—she screamed; then a laugh—she shuddered—and the noise grew less. She breathed again, but, feeling her knees weaken, went back to the bed, and sat listening in fascination for the murmuring sounds to develop again into a quarrel.

Suddenly, without the warning of gradually approaching sounds she had prepared herself for, she heard footsteps just outside.

She knew them. An impulse to flee seized her. She looked about for a place to hide in, a place to get through, to jump from. She could not bear to see him, she felt as a murderess whose victim's ghost is upon her. His image flashed before her, pinched with hunger and cold, worn, embittered with disappointment, terrible with its long unrequited love turned to hatred—gray, with glassy eyes.

She looked wildly, but she could not move. Besides, it was too late, a hand was on the door.

As it opened, a deep stillness fell upon her, a suspension of all.

A spell seemed to snap with his coming into the range of the candle-light; it was as to a child locked all night in a graveyard the cock-crow that lays the ghosts and heralds the day. She took a feeble breath and her heart gave a warm little throb. The very face! only, a young man's face rather than a boy's, thinner and bolder than ever, but, thank Heaven! not pathetic, not heart-breaking—but with red where red should be, with living light in the eyes.

He held his violin; he was meanly clad, and his woollen muffler was of a cheap and dismal tint no mother would have chosen for him.

He looked in surprise at the lighted candle, and quickly cast his eyes about, frowning to see who had taken this liberty. He caught sight of her, blinked and narrowed his eyes, to distinguish.

She could not make a sound, or bring a vestige of expression to her face, or lift the pale little hands from her black lap—but sat transfixed under his questioning stare.

He took a few steps, uttered a jubilant shout, and dashed towards her with outstretched arms— But he stopped before reaching her. He gave a glance around the horrible little room, a glance at her face with the eyes full of stern sadness, of reproach for the many, many lies he had told her. Abruptly he turned his back to her and dropped on his knees beside the table, saying furiously in disjointed syllables as he pressed his working face against his arms. "You won't understand! You never understand any-

thing! I think sometimes that you are a fool!"

But he felt her soft icy hands tremble about his head, he felt her fluttering breath in his neck. She was kneeling beside him, saying in choked whispers in the intervals of lifting her poor lips from his wet face, "Don't speak!—Don't speak!"

She was straining him to her with a passionate tenderness never shown another being, raining on him the sweetest kisses.

Both fell to crying as if their hearts would break.

CHLOE, CHLORIS, AND CYTHEREA

To make you acquainted by sight with young Chloris: she was a tall girl, a trifle meagre in outline, but not disagreeably so; she had light reddish-brown hair, and a sprinkling of freckles on a peachy skin, and those eyes with dead-leaf spots in them; altogether an air of openness and intelligent goodness that had quickly thrown the newly introduced off the question—was she pretty? But she was pretty, too, at her hours.

On this day she had shut out the sun by means of the green Venetian blinds, and her room, like a submerged crystal chamber, was full of a watery light; she herself, white clothed, made a fair green-shadowy nymph in the dim green atmosphere.

This was her first hour of complete con-

scious content. So rich was she in content that she had set herself to perusing a volume of the dryest essays, a present for a diligent girl graduate.

This sense of life unfolding like a normal flower and becoming the perfection of a rose was too much for the grateful heart to contemplate at its ease; some great demonstration towards God must follow on such contemplation. And Chloris in her security putting it off until bedtime, sat reading about the discipline of the will, the happy blood all the while keeping up in her veins a pleasant undercurrent babbling of other matters. Two hours more and the summer sun would be reaching its glorious haven, the cool flow in with the darkness, and time take up again that sweet scanning of the lines of her idyl. . . .

After reading the same passage some seven times, Chloris let her book lie a moment in her lap. How marvellous, how simple, how natural, how exquisite! Truly like the coming up of a flower. First, they were children together, fair-dealing, un-

quarrelsome playmates; then, schoolboy and schoolgirl, always good unsentimental friends; and finally, time, passing over them, slowly turned them to lovers; for this, no question, was whither they were tending: quiet, undemonstrative, unjealous, faithful, devoted lovers, presently married people, and by and by, God pleasing, tenants of one same grave. And this sweetness in the heart, this best of all earthly goods, God granted it to the humblest of his creatures! Why, then, were so many dissatisfied with this dear earth? Why were some on it interested in the discipline of the will? Ah, this summer, so endearingly begun, to be ended so — and Chloris, in a confusion of bliss, almost as if to give herself a countenance towards herself, took up her book again, finding moonlight and wild azaleas and whippoorwills between the lines, a dappled, singing shingle, a golden beach, velvet winds from over sea.

The sunshine crept off the window-square; a sadness instantly invaded the room; Chloris jumped up to open the blinds. Time to

dress! Then she did her hair as painstakingly as ably, put on a just-ironed white gown with a violet figure, and stood at the glass weighing the question of a velvet band around the neck. A fateful sound already was dawning on the distance outside, but she did not as yet hear it. Too hot! She tossed the velvet ribbon in the top bureau-drawer so unconcernedly as if not, at that moment, the Parcæ had been tangling the skein of her life, and wondered idly if any one describing her would call her pretty. She thought, in conscience, not; but of a charming appearance, she hoped any one would.

At this point penetrated to her brain a sound of voices out on the road beyond the lawn and the hedge. She looked between the curtains.

Two ladies, unknown to her, were slowly sauntering past in the direction of the beach; one, near middle age, in a darkish gown; the other, young, in light colors of a distinctly fashionable tone; this latter carried over her shoulder a very large, fluffy, and, as it showed

even at this distance, inexpressibly costly parasol. She turned her face a moment on the ancient vine-overclambered country-house, from one window of which peeped Chloris, looked it up and down and across, and turned away, making, Chloris supposed, some comment upon it to her companion.

When they had disappeared from sight, Chloris, still at the window, musing on that face seen a moment, heard a leisurely jingling, and saw pass at a walking pace an empty shining carriage, drawn by two superb bays, driven by a man in livery.

"It must be their turn-out," she concluded her wondering. "Who can they be but the people that were to move into the Beauregard cottage?"

Then, as there was time to spare before tea, she sat down in the window. Shortly, was a lively jingling, a trampling, and the shining carriage bowled swiftly by on its way back from the beach; on its cushions, two ladies under a broad lacy parasol; a mighty cloud of dust running after it, never to overtake.

Almost at the same moment Chloris saw Him, half the subject of her idyl, coming across the lawn.

She went to meet him.

"Who are the arrivals?" she asked at once.

And here was pronounced, for the first time before Chloris, the name of Cytherea.

"Cytherea, Damon? Who is Cytherea? Where does she come from? Do you know her?"

"Very slightly," answered the young man; "I have met her in town. She had told me she thought of coming here for the summer, but I supposed it was conversation. I had completely forgotten, until I saw her this afternoon. She is entranced with everything! You can never see our poky little old place in its true light: you must get a description of it from her, Chloris. She will find it deadly dull before the end of a week; but for the moment she imagines quiet to be all she wants. She has been working like a slave at doing the proper thing in town."

"She has brought her style with her, I see."

"They are inseparable. She arrived yesterday on the late train, and you should see the change already in the Beauregard."

"You have been there, then?"

"Just a moment. They called to me from the veranda. They were having tea. Fancy their bringing down a grand-piano!"

"Does she play much?"

"I don't know. Very probably. She looks as if she might."

"Oh, no, Damon! There you mistake. She looks as if she mightn't. She is very pretty, but I will vouch for it she can't play—"

"Perhaps the cousin is the pianist. We shall see. I said you would call on them this evening."

"I, Damon? The instant they arrive? Why did you say that? Why should I call before they have had time to breathe?"

"Do you mind? I am so sorry. They asked me to come, and I half promised. It is likely to be somewhat slow for them here if we stand on ceremony. You will like them, I am sure."

"You are sure? No doubt I shall. But to-night seems rather—instantaneous, if you don't mind. You will excuse me to them, and I will wait till they get a little more settled."

"Settled! They have brought down an army of servants. The house looks as if they had lived in it for a month."

"Make what excuse for me you please, then."

"You won't come, Chloris?"

"I think not. Not this evening. Go by yourself, and tell me all the great changes to-morrow. She will be much better pleased to see you than me, anyway."

"Why do you say that?"

"Her face, my dear boy! She can't play the piano, to speak of, and she greatly prefers men to women."

"Perhaps you do her an injustice—"

"Have I said anything disparaging? I signalled two virtues, I think. You don't really mind my not going, Damon? I had intended to write letters this evening, and mend table-cloths and read to father."

When, shortly after tea, Damon had gone, Chloris tried to return herself into a truthful person by reading an hour to her father, and adding a dozen stitches to a delicate darn, and writing a note, which, when finished, she tore up. In order, as far as possible, with her conscience, she seated herself at the piano, a poor, tin-voiced instrument, tired of the sea-air. No one so well as Chloris, accustomed to its senile vagaries, could make the worn thing discourse music; her greatest successes on it were old-time compositions written in the day of spinet and harpsichord, minuets with a sprinkling of grace-notes, things not sonorous or profound. To-night, playing for no one's praise, she plunged haphazard into the melodies most sympathetic at the moment, stormy and subtle, melancholy and intricate and modern. It was Chloris's one proud gift, this effectiveness at the piano.

Her father and his elderly sisters took themselves off to bed on the stroke of ten. Chloris remained on the adjustable stool, relieved at their going. She took up her

playing again, without trying now to keep her eyes dry.

The sweet, hot air of the day, cooling, was turned to dew outside; something of the same kind seemed taking place within herself—and the dew was tears. Why had she been so curiously uplifted that day, so at rest concerning every point in life, so sure of one thing at least? Nothing was changed, yet she saw no reason now for blessing this summer, golden hour for hour, and looking to it for the greatest, serenest happiness. Damon? What was Damon to her, or she to Damon? He had never in so many words made love to her, and she had never felt the first pang of wonder or disappointment at this. They had walked, rowed, ridden together. What of it? They should do these things again a hundred times, probably. What of that? What had she been dreaming, erewhile? Or was this the dream, this bad one? Something splendid and shining and purple had gone gray.

While continuing mechanically to play, she looked through the open window into

the summer night. It was rightfully her moon, that honeyed bright moon outside; her balm-breathing night; it was her silver sea yonder out of sight; they were her odorous pine-needle paths in the sighing grove—and she was robbed of them. And the sense of it gave her a seething in the heart, the like of which sensation she had never dreamed existed: as if a painful separation of all the atoms in it one from the other, as well as the stern conviction of being —oh, the novel idea!—a fool.

"I won't have it!" she muttered, emphatically, without knowing definitely what she meant, and struck an angry discord.

Through her playing reached her suddenly that merry harness-jingle of the afternoon, approaching, passing, fading away.

"There they go — to the beach for the second time to-day — to look at the ocean by light of the moon."

When in little less than an hour she heard the breaking again, on the quiet air, of the fatuous silvery jingle, she let her playing fall to a mere musical murmur, and lis-

tened, acutely, burning all the while with shame.

"Go slowly, Humphrey," she caught, in a rich, sweet voice; "I want to listen to the music."

"She plays really wonderfully. I have never heard playing I preferred to hers," came in a well-known deeper voice, at which Chloris's cheeks waxed hotter still. She pressed her foot on the pedal and shut herself within a wall of dinning, buzzing sound.

When she had lifted it, and risen, the road was empty, the night silent, but for the crickets and the distant surf, as the grave.

Several days passed, each bringing Chloris its very natural request from Damon that she would go with him to pay her respects to the new neighbors; but with a perversity that surprised herself more livelily than him, she daily found a bad reason for putting off the duty. This hindered the progress of the idyl; for Damon had a delicate conscience where these strangers were concerned; he

would not see them bored in a latitude whose honor, as an earlier inhabitant, he appeared to have at heart.

And presently the atmosphere of the whole country-side seemed qualified by the presence of this Cytherea. It seemed to Chloris one could not escape the effect of her, without taking to the deepest of the woods. She was like an unstopped jar of some powerful essence; the little country world was redolent of her.

Before the time Chloris had at last rigidly fixed for a formal visit came a message from Cytherea inviting her. Hard as she sought to discover a reason for misliking the dainty note, she could find none; it was irreproachable, and Chloris dressed herself for the occasion with a divided mind, the preponderant part of which was finally comfort: she should at least grapple now with a reality.

She came to Cytherea's house at evening under Damon's escort. As one approached it among the trees it looked rather more like one's idea of an Eastern temple than a seacoast cottage. The veranda was behung

with colored paper moons, glowing subduedly among the vines; soft light streamed through lace from the changed interior.

Excitement took Chloris from herself. Now the great adversary was welcoming her; and Chloris, at the touch of a warm, soft hand, said to herself, "What bugbear have I been frightening myself with?" and found ease and ability to converse, and release from that sense of disadvantage that had ridden her helpless heart like a nightmare.

This atmosphere of the great world that went with Cytherea, how awakening, how satisfying after all, to the mind! Not the smallness of envy, thought Chloris, should keep her from giving it its due, or getting her benefit from it. In the distance and abstract she had hated it; but entered into, seen close, how unconscious, how inoffensive, nay, genial, it proved! What a great good, too, this wealth that permitted such distinction in luxury! Country girl as she was, it seemed to Chloris she was breathing her native air.

At Cytherea's prayer she sat down at the piano, and to her own surprise played better than usual. When she had done, she begged the hostess to play. She forgot how she had declared that Cytherea's face showed no soul for music.

She was surprised to hear the lady say, "I play hardly at all." She sincerely now could not believe it.

"Ah, well!" laughed Cytherea; and good-naturedly she pushed a chair to the piano, and appeared preparing to begin.

Chloris looked on in some wonder. Cytherea seated herself half away from the key-board, one nonchalant arm over the back of her chair, her curly forehead on her hand; and, the first to smile at her own affectation, played an elaborate waltz, very languidly, with her left hand.

Impossible for the eyes to leave her a moment while she performed her pretty trick; and ably enough she performed it, with an adorable cream-white hand.

Chloris seemed to be slowly returning to consciousness. What perfection was here!

Nature had given this creature everything. Criticism of her could only pass current under the stamp of envy. That gracious dark beauty, that warm radiance! And sparkle, and charm—with winningness, dignity, rarity, variousness!

Chloris looked over at Damon; and the image of his fascinated face, as, a fond forgotten smile on his lips, he followed with his dark dog-eyes each movement of Cytherea's, affected her as a drop of poison let into her blood. She seemed to herself growing aged and haggard, even as she sat there, the dancing measure beating on her ear. Her hands lay cold in the lap of her best gown—modest made-over gown of pale purplish silk that she wore with a lace bertha of past fashion, once her poor mother's. "What is the use of trying to contend with a thing like that?" her heart asked, dully.

An acuter pain pierced it when, the waltz played out, the laugh following it laughed out, and conversation resumed, she realized the faintest possible shade of disregard in Cytherea for the observations made by

Damon. Cytherea prized her, Chloris's, utterances distinctly more; her, she seemed, from all her manner, to be honoring; him, for some reason, she held a trifle cheap. This seemed to Chloris just a little more unendurable than all the rest. And the dear boy, who, totally ignorant of the effect he produced, was in such high spirits, was so anxious to please, so cheerfully making a mantle in the mud of himself for the beauty to tread upon.

At last it was over; Chloris lay in her own bed in the pale summer darkness, and felt she was the heart of the created world, and this pain man's old inheritance; it seemed the very essence of her being which was distilled slowly from her eyes.

On the day following, Chloris punctually sought Cytherea, for appreciation must be shown the cordiality of the beauty. That was a question apart from others: one is just and polite before anything else. A person overhearing the chatting and laughing of that afternoon in Cytherea's room

would have thought certainly he listened to a pair of heart friends. The greater expense of admiration between the two women seemed of a truth to be borne by Cytherea. Chloris must look herself mentally over in astonishment at this value set on her by so great a judge. After the examination she felt foolish and humble. She felt profoundly how, all being different, she too could have worshipped Cytherea.

And now she must be concerned in every sort of rural festivity organized by Damon for Cytherea's amusement; she must see the rival's first effect of being mildly bored by Damon's whole-souled dedication turn into an effect of indulgence, daily tinged with increased liking; for who in nature could fail to do final justice to one so simple, so sincere as Damon—Damon, with his dear, clear, curiously gentle Roman face and curly hair?

"The heat does not seem to agree with you this summer, child," one of the aunts concluded her kindly meant scrutiny of Chloris's face; and the girl's heart tightened with affright.

She stood that day before the glass, and, leaning her elbows on the bureau, seriously examined the tinted shadow. "All is of no use," she said. "The more I care, the more I must look like that. Does it not seem a little strange that the more one loves the less lovely one should become? And a little hard, too, perhaps, oh, you, my God, with all respect, who have arranged these little matters?" And tired, discouraged Chloris began weakly to laugh aloud, though she was alone; and watched the grimacing of her own reflection with a sort of brutal contemptuousness. "Oh, you sickening object!" she exclaimed, and hid the delicate, nervous, tell-tale face in her hands. "This cannot go on!" she raved. "Human flesh cannot endure it — and I cannot alter it. All must soon see how it is with me. I can barely keep a hold on my temper now. I must get away. Damon shall court her; she shall bloom and smile at her ease for him. Welcome to each other — both! I shall be where I cannot see it. I refused to visit Fidele in her mountain home. I had a

use already—God help me!—for every hour of the summer. I will write to say I repent. Then Damon, Cytherea, sing duets out in the canoe by moonlight; find clover-leaves for each other. I shall be scouring the mountain in search of healing herbs, and I do not doubt but, God helping, I shall find them. It is not in nature that a torture like this should last!"

And Chloris, when next she appeared before the public eye, looked almost triumphant. And when her leave had been taken of all, and the swift air of change was blowing against her brow, her heart felt so strangely sound and quiet that she almost laughed, asking herself, "Why am I going away? I am recovered merely at the notion of it. Had I but known, I could have remained like a little heroine, and stood it out."

But the hours passing broke down and carried off more and more all the gallant props of pride and resolution, and at last Chloris sat in the galloping car, a drooping runaway, who looked steadily out of the window, and saw the flying scene through tears.

Contemptible, countrified Chloris, with her freckles and inferior clothes, and so ordinary notions of conduct and taste, running away from comparison with the peerless Cytherea; taking her envy and weakness out of sight till she got strength to disguise them.

Now the scenery, which she had not been seeing, became more lonely and wild; the first low hills, heavy and slow in the general nimbleness of things, shifted themselves with an amiable clumsiness till they had closed in Chloris with her train; waking her suddenly, with a faintly happy sense of diversion from immediate suffering, to the feeling of being a child again visiting strange countries. Then wheeled and tumbled themselves about and came to meet her the little hills' big brothers, the mountains, with velvety sides, and rocky, rosy summits. A weight for no reason seemed to melt away from Chloris's chest as she looked up at them, and thought of living among them now for many a day—the distinguished, sage, cool, sturdily benevolent ones, so high above, so

far from, the world she knew, down on the hot-colored, populous plain.

Here she was at last, where she must alight; in a high, pure, crystal-clear atmosphere, at a little lost place, wildly green to eyes used to the sun-burned shore, forgotten of all the world but this train that remembered it for a second twice a day.

And here was Fidele! It seemed to Chloris she had not half known, until this moment, how fond she was of Fidele. Tears sprang to her eyes on meeting the familiar eyes, and she embraced her old school friend with an impulse of overflowing gratitude. She felt like a storm-beaten lamb come to some sort of shelter at last.

After the first moment's frantic clutch the two friends stood apart, holding hands, and looking each other fondly and frankly over, with wide, moved smiles. Fidele, seeing Chloris's eyes, wondered why tears had not come to her, too; and compared her own nature unfavorably with her friend's rich nature; and at this thought of her friend's deep, sweet nature, behold! tears

were come in her affectionate eyes, too. Then both girls fell to giggling like school-girls, from mere association of this meeting with other meetings; and in a moment were talking lightly and inconsecutively, in an involuntary imitation of old days; and Fidele had taken her friend's arm tightly under her own, intertwined their fingers, and was dragging her along at a hop-and-skip pace.

"What a godsend you are to me!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "There is not a soul in this forsaken place to whom one can talk like a Christian. Oh, but we are slow! Oh, but we are primitive! Oh, but we are simple!—"

"What air it is!" Chloris breathed, profoundly. "How sweet! I never dreamed such green!—My dear, this is Paradise!"

"The air is good enough. The grass is certainly green. But oh, the people are green too! But now you are here, we will change all this, dear. What a holiday! You will inspire us. We will rise up, and look into our closets, and fetch out where-

with to make a good impression on the stranger. You bring the very air of civilization with you in your clothes and hair. Where did you get it, Chlo—the general air, you know? How ravishingly you do your hair! And that little hat! Now, who in the world but you would have a hat like that? Oh, you rare darling! Do you know you are greatly improved? You are thinner, but it suits you. You always were a beauty, you know. Yes, you were! But you have acquired so much besides—such an interesting air—yes, you have!—so much expression. No one could see you without — gospel truth, Chlo! But, yes—I will—I will hold my tongue. Did you bring your music at least, for there is a piano, such as it is. Thank Heaven! You shall make their capture with song. They shall grovel. You know, dear, I am not really so silly as I seem; your arriving has turned my head. I always did adore you, but it is even better than I remembered."

Chloris that night, alone at last, tried to readjust herself, to get back through this

new experience her self of yesterday. The morning of her starting from home, but sixteen hours removed, seemed withdrawn into a much remoter past; a screen of glittering, crumbling, changing color was arisen between herself and it. She interrogated her breast curiously for that pain lately grown so familiar, forgotten for the first time only in these last hours; her breast did not answer by at once producing it. She goaded it tentatively with a sharp memory or two; it responded sluggishly — a divinely restful torpor was possessing it. She knelt by the window, and looked out at the still, strong, black mountains; instinctively she wafted profound thanks to their rude majesties. Far, far away in her dream at this moment, in an infinitely small, sun-warmed, murmuring plain, moved two tiny figures: the great Damon, who erewhile filled the entire horizon of her life, and the great Cytherea, who interposed her fair shape between her and the sun, shutting off the light of life—two tiny black figures, in a far-off, sunshiny place it fatigued her to think of. Only the moun-

tains were big and important; and this cool, rough bedchamber was fifteen by twelve; only Fidele and herself and the people seen for the first time this evening were life-size and real.

Stretching her tired limbs in the bed, that had nothing to-night in common with the rack, feeling natural sleep creep over her as it had long not done, she remembered with a vague joy that she was young; she divined a time ahead — perhaps not so far ahead either — when life would become possible again.

She felt as if cosily tucked in and kept warm by the sense of Fidele's affectionate appreciation, and the evident admiration of her friends, called in even on this first evening to greet her. It was good. It restored one's lost self-confidence.

The last thought Chloris was conscious of was not for Damon this once, but Demetrius. (Demetrius, I said. The reader here revolts. Chloris, Cytherea, a Chloe apparently still to come, and Fidele, Damon, Demetrius! Are these names to pass off on the discriminating

reader in a tale that has nothing to do with the times of Theocritus or Addison? I confess it, I would have deceived. The persons in this story knew themselves by none of the names I have set down. They had been given at the font, and had by chance and inheritance come into, names that represented them far less well. Who can assume to fitly name a babe in arms? With a pure purpose I rechristened them. If you could know what, for instance, was the real name of Cytherea— But enough.)

On the next morning arises Chloris, constating with thankfulness that no more than the night before is her heart bleeding at every pore. Filled with a venerable feminine desire to still increase the favorable impression she is sure she has made on the inhabitants of this high hamlet, she does her hair more than ever engagingly, puts on her crispest white gown with the lavender ribbons, and her broad straw hat with roses— the hat Damon had praised in the early part of the season. Something stirs in her sleeping bosom at the remembrance; she pauses

in her task of pinning it on; the green-gray eyes with the brown spots grow fixed upon a vision, small as if seen through the wrong end of the opera-glass: On a shining shore, two little figures setting out in a sail-boat—only two, for the cousin has pleaded the disagreeable effect on her of the motion of the sea. Chloris sits down discouraged, feeling the blood drop from her face, and her heart present her with as finished a pain as ever. "It really matters so very little," she murmurs, firmly restraining from wringing her hands; "I only—only should like to know how long this kind of thing may be supposed to last!"

Chloris and Fidele loiter about the garden full of morning sunshine, snipping off wet sweet-peas and roses, and reminding each other of things. Then, to please Chloris, they go for a stroll. Chloris is eager for a little climb. Heated and pleasantly tired, they come to the top of an eminence and sit down under the only clump of trees, in company of the unbudging horned cows, who know their claim is good, for they

got there first. Fidele, leaning against a tree-trunk, fans herself more and more fitfully with her hat, and presently slumbers. Chloris, with her head in Fidele's lap, can never weary of looking off over the faint-hued valley which the shadows of clouds softly overstray. In this delicious bodily relaxation after hill-climbing in the sun, strange peace inundates her soul, and she entertains a superstition that it is flowing out to her from the mountains, and lies luxuriously, letting herself be done good to. "They know the secret of peace," she muses in her manner of a girl. "They cannot speak, but the effect of their knowledge radiates from them, and reaches us. The end of all—of all is peace. All works towards it incessantly, as one sees nature do towards harmony. Through these battles, to peace. Why can one not remember it down on the plain?" Now a cloud obscures the sun that gropes through it with long golden fingers; Chloris, dreaming, ponders half wistfully what it would be to remain here always, begin life anew, never return where one

had suffered so much, and was surely so little missed!

On their way home the girls meet Demetrius in his chaise, on his rounds. He reins in, and leans out of the leathern hood; with arms alink the girls stand in the white road below, in a great bath of light. They converse a moment; Chloris's lifted face, with the stamp on it still of her high thinking on the hill-top, is like a flushed pearl under her rose-laden hat.

"You must let me show you the country," says Demetrius, before driving on.

When he is gone, Chloris and Fidele naturally fall to talking of him.

"How is it," says Chloris, "that a man so superior has attained his age and is merely a doctor in a place like this?"

"My dear, we have our ailments like the rest. You don't grudge us a good doctor? He was born here, and after a good number of years down in the haunts of men came back in a natural sort of way. His father left him property up here. He is not ambitious; he has an abundance of money. He

practises more or less for the love of it, and something to do. He is our most presentable man, and I want you to appreciate our good points in him. He adores music; the piano I spoke of is his. He has invited us up there; as soon as you feel inclined we will go."

When, in a few days, Chloris consented to go, one-half the curious population went with her, to hear her play.

The stiff farm-house parlor, closed nine-tenths of the year, had been made to breathe out its musty ice-house atmosphere; lighted and garnished and filled with guests, it scarcely recognized itself.

Demetrius leaned on the instrument while Chloris played, his untrimmed head dreamily drooping, his eyes half closed, like a lazy cat's in the sunshine, when a hand is stroking it the right way. When she had finished, and all lifted their hands and praised and questioned her, he turned away with a sigh, saying nothing; and yet both knew that the truest music-lover of all was he; and when she played again it was chiefly with the thought of him as an audience.

"What an air of intelligence your hands have when you play," he said, later. "But it is the same when you are crocheting, or just drumming on the chair-arm. They look as if they could talk, and utter such wise and witty things."

A very friendly understanding was almost at once established between them; after which, he being such a sensible, direct, humorous man, well on towards middle age, and Fidele urging it, it seemed but proper to accept the offered seat in his chaise and see the country to the best advantage.

They travelled many leagues behind his mare; they reached many points of vantage from which to look off at the view. Their conversation was half laughter; yet Chloris felt a serene security in the awe she knew she inspired.

In the country doctor's company, such was his effect on her and hers on him, Chloris felt always sweetly young, and unusually well-dressed, unusually beautiful and brilliant —as well as experienced in the ways of the world, and possessed of a strong and compli-

cated character. With all this, something of an impostor.

After many rides, many conversations, the light about Demetrius was insensibly changed, and offered him under a different aspect. What genuine kindliness in his rather heavy yet well-featured face! what a good, sane, comprehensive intelligence under his shaggy hair! and under his country-made waistcoat a heart suspected to be tender and faithful! If he had done little, risen little, circumstances were more to blame than will; and it pierced through his mockery of himself sometimes that he was not all satisfied now with his condition; ambition that had slumbered gave signs of waking. And he was still young enough to mould his fate to a different shape.

Chloris, regarding him, as she told herself, merely in the light of a specimen in which to study human nature, concluded that the woman who intrusted her happiness to Demetrius, at least in the event of her being a superior creature, would be in the main a very fortunate one. Nothing to fear in this

man from inconstancy; no account to make with the inflammable imagination of youth; the gracious, condescending woman would get unbounded gratitude from his humility for every little favor shown. Her life would be so peaceful, so guarded from all trouble that care can keep at bay, so surrounded with delicate consideration.

So the herds-grass purpled and was mown; the mustard yellowed, and its yellow vanished; and the apple began to redden. Then Demetrius, with a little help from everybody, gave a party—a party the like of which had not been given in the sleepy place since his sister's marriage a dozen years before; but this Chloris from afar, as Fidele had foretold, was inspiring the natives.

And undoubtedly she was the queen of the party. To see her was to know as much. She wore a grand gown of pale purplish silk, with a real lace bertha (the talk of the place for nine days after), and white flowers pricked into the shiny structure of her hair.

There was hired music, and dancing on the waxed kitchen-floor, and an opportunity

never surpassed in the annals of the neighborhood to get enough of good things to eat.

Towards the end, when one-half the simple revellers were gone, and the musicians were silenced with feeding, and the night air breathed in at the open windows with a feel of great lateness in it, came a petition to Chloris to play a piece on the piano.

After various laughing negatives, yielding, Chloris, whose eyes were lightsome and dancing to-night, pushed away the stool, and, substituting for it a chair, sat a little sideways in this, with one arm over the back; and, a curious little smile playing on her lips, propped her ruffled head with its wilted flowers on her right hand; and, while the country innocents exchanged wondering glances, with her nimble left hand, amply sufficient to the task alone, began playing a waltz—a sweet, dreamy waltz.

When they were at last home, and Fidele, half undressed, had come in to chat a moment with her friend, she asked, "Did you enjoy yourself, dearie?"

"Immensely!" said Chloris. "How nice

they all are to me! What dear, kind things they are! By the way, though, there was something I wanted to ask. Who is that dark-haired, plump young woman, with black bugle eyes, and a skin like red-and-white paper—quite passable-looking, if she did not look so sulky?"

"What did she wear?"

"Something pretentious but unbecoming. It had a lot of bead-trimming. Now, speaking of how nice every one and everything was, I except that girl's manner. *She* was positively rude. I did not know how to take it. I have met her before, with all the others, and passed her on the road, bowing my best; but we have never more than exchanged a word or two, so I can have done nothing to offend her."

Fidele was laughing.

"Who is she?" asked Chloris.

"That is Chloe," replied Fidele.

"Chloe?"

"You mustn't mind her rudeness, dearie. She is really a good sort of creature. But she is no doubt sorely tried."

"What tries her? Why do you laugh?"

"Demetrius! He was a shade partial to her before you came—not enough to cause comment in any place but this. And, even here, not enough to lay himself open to blame. It is a pity, though, that she can't keep her feelings hidden, and must vent her spite on you. Silly thing! I have no patience with that kind of girl."

Chloris's fingers became absent among the hair they were braiding. She looked into the lamp-flame with a vacant expression.

Fidele plied the brush in her tangled locks, and went on chatting.

Suddenly Chloris, who for some time had not spoken, laughed.

"What is it, dear?" asked Fidele, looking up at her friend, where she stood still staring in the lamp-flame. "Have I said anything funny?"

"No, it was nothing you said. I was thinking—my mind travelled from one thing to another—you know how it jumps about—and I had to laugh, before I knew, at a stupid old circumstance—"

"What circumstance?"

"Oh, nothing, dear—a thing we learned in school, in French, a fable—never mind!"

"A fable! My dear Chloris, how interesting! What fable?"

"I can't quote it. I have forgotten my French. It was about a hare—a hare who ran away in terror of a bull, and in his flight came to a swamp where the frogs were just as much afraid of him. Wouldn't it be interesting to know the rest? What the hare did, whether he put on his fiercest outside, and tried to make the frogs quake in their little wet boots?"

"What nonsense, you dear idiot! Ask Demetrius! He will give his best consideration to the frog question, and be impressed with its profoundness, while Chloe wears bead trimming and grows sage-color. Goodnight, dear. I am dreadfully sleepy."

"I mean you shall take me to call on Chloe some day soon. Now that I see her face with a different idea of her, it is a nice face! Poor child! I could never settle down contentedly under the notion that some one

disliked me; could you? Even a dog! I have had such a happy, peaceful time here, in this dear little place, I want every one to feel kindly towards me when I leave."

"You speak as if I were going to let you go, Chloris."

"Oh, my dearest, I don't want to talk of it. I have put off talking of it, day after day, yet you must know that I can only stay a very little longer. Think of it! I came for a month, and I have stayed—how long is it? And father must be getting lonesome; and he so seldom writes, and then tells me little or nothing. And everything must be needing me—"

"You extraordinary girl!" exclaimed Fidele, now very wide awake; "I swear I absolutely do not understand you! What do you mean? First you seem—you seem—and then—and then suddenly—"

Fidele could not get out her words, for Chloris's hand was across her lips.

"Hush!" she pleaded, quite earnestly. "Say nothing about it! When a thing has been spoken it seems to exist! You don't

understand — I don't understand either. Who is consistent? Who knows what he wants? Who knows ever what he is doing? How many creatures we crush just walking across the grass! A path opens ahead, we take it blindly, not knowing whither it leads. With good reason we say we grope in the dark. Let us have the grace, then, when a moment's illumination is granted us, to go by its light. You don't know what I mean; I scarcely know myself. But don't try to keep me, dear! Remain at my side every minute that is left of my stay here; see me to the train without the shadow of an adventure—and I will love you all my life!"

And a few days later the train that had brought Chloris picked her up again, all flushed with Fidele's last kisses, and flew with her homeward.

She looked out of the window with other eyes than those she had first turned upon the mountains. Yet tears were in them, too, as she said, "Good-bye, dears! Your little sister leaves you, made quite well again. But never will she cease to love you. You

shall be always in her dreams. And she will come back one day. When God sends her sorrows she will take refuge again with you."

All through the first hours of being rushed along across the brilliant fading land, that she looked at, scarcely seeing, she retained a sense of exaltation. She seemed to herself as a sword after the proofs of furnace and ice-brook. She could have laughed to think of the philosopher that was going home in place of the pallid victim of an almost pathological sensibility.

The mountains were dwindling to little hills; the latter-year sun was too barely bright: a crude earth-color and a sombre green took place of the angelic vague green and blue and pink of the dewier, earlier period. The plain was opening with its more trivial detail. Chloris's mind descended to its level, and projected itself with a limited emotion into the circumstances of the approaching home-coming. She felt prepared to endure whatever awaited her with grace and dignity; she felt sure, indeed, that she

should feel very little. "I have learned the secret of life," she said to herself; "I have weighed and measured everything."

At this same moment an elderly gentleman who had a daughter was thinking how touchingly young and inexperienced his fellow-traveller looked; in his old heart he felt sorry for her, somehow, for being so young.

"I have weighed and measured everything," she said. "God is real, God lasts, and the love of Him. Human passion passes away. One might almost say that it does not exist. It is like a physical pain: it tortures, you try to locate it, you fix your mind upon the presumed seat of it—it is not there, there is no pain; and presently, when you are well, you cannot call up a remembrance of the sensation. I feel fitted to write a book on this subject. I thought I could never endure my life without Damon —dear, dear Damon! Yet I live and am improved in health. And, blinded by I shall never be able to explain what mist, I was beginning to adapt my mind to the thought

was within a minute of her journey's end. It flashed past. She gathered up her things; she came out on the platform, and with a joyous heart looked for her father's gray face and his hand extended to help her down.

He was not there, and she got off the train alone, half-conscious of a dog-cart not far, with a horse behaving as a horse should not at the locomotive. The superbly indifferent iron monster puffed off, dragging after it its train; the indignant horse quieted down. She heard her name called; the voice was the man's in the dog-cart, it was Damon's. The philosopher hurried towards him with an insanely beating heart, an uplifted, greeting, beaming face.

He helped her in, and his trickle of answers met her stream of questions, and her stream of answers his trickle of questions, as they jogged, tilting along between the dusty roadsides. The warm flood of her home-coming sensations subsided a little, and she turned to look at him, to take a fond inventory of his face—dear old faithful friend, so kind to fetch her himself! Her heart tightened.

What was gone wrong with Damon?—Damon, whom she had been picturing so happy, and was just rousing her spirit to question casually concerning Cytherea. Even at that moment they were approaching her dwelling, when the question, if she could make her voice right, not too indifferent, nor yet too interested, would seem so in place.

The grass on the lawn was long and uneven, constellated with twinkling autumn dandelions; the windows were shuttered, the veranda was empty, the chimney smokeless; a forgotten hammock rope, blackened and twisted by the rain, swung from a branch in front of the deserted house, thumping faintly against the tree-trunk. Chloris turned her lengthened face towards Damon; he lifted to hers a pair of very miserable eyes, and said, in an unresonant voice, "You should have got back in time for the cattle-fair. It was better than usual this year. Cookson's little mare took a prize."

"You don't mean it!" faltered Chloris, and looking straight ahead set her lips hard,

to keep down an impetuous flood of hatred for Cytherea.

She saw the propriety of continuing to talk; but she could not keep her mind on it. Damon's powers of conversation, too, had failed him. He kept a stolid face to the horse's head; and they drove in silence to her door, where, alighting, she was swallowed in a sea of affectionate fatherly and auntly embraces.

"I may stay to tea, mayn't I?" asked Damon, dully, from his corner, where he seemed sitting in the cold.

Chloris gave him a place beside herself, and treated him like a sick, beloved child; but so tactfully, he could know only that it soothed.

She let him lie on the sofa, afterwards, while she played, and the others slept in the upper chambers.

She played with upturned face, pale and gentle and full of understanding; her eyebrows lifted, her eyes very large and kind. She would have thought that Damon slept, but that now and again he sighed.

When at last she stopped to look for something among her music, to go on with, he got up and came to the piano-side. "I am so glad you have got back," he said, from all his heart; "you are such a brick. Good Lord, how I have missed you—"

He turned away and went aimlessly to the window, and stood looking out. "I suppose it is time I went," he said. "But I hate to go home! I don't know what is come to me, I can't sleep these nights."

Chloris had gone to the window, too, and stood beside him, her indulgent young face, that wore a world-old expression, turned on the dimly glimmering white petunia-beds outside.

"Would you—won't you come out for a little stroll, Chloris? Run for your shawl, there is a dear girl, and let us go over to the beach. It isn't really late, and I am so restless, and I don't want to go alone, and it is so stuffy in my room at home."

Chloris, without a word of demur, took her wrap and followed him. They walked side by side in silence; the sense they must

have in common of the beauty of the night might at first take lieu of conversation; when that sense must be outworn, they still thought their thoughts in silence. Chloris knew the relief it is not to pretend; Damon thought only of himself in this hour.

It was she, after a while, that led—tall, slender figure a step ahead of him, walking swiftly, with a sort of intrepidity. With his head a little bowed, his hands behind him, he followed.

She led him to the beach, and without regard for time or fitness of things, farther and farther along the smooth sands, away from home; then, by a long loop, back to the homeward road, as if with the determination to tire him out. She herself was conscious of no fatigue. She felt like a spirit; her uplifted eyes seemed so expanded that they could take in all the radiant firmament.

At last, as if awaking, he stopped and vaguely looked about, saying, "I am ready to drop! Good Lord, how far have you been taking me? Let us sit down a moment and rest."

They were not far from home, on the edge of a familiar pine-grove that ran down to the lapping inland sea. She sank on the dry pine-needles; he dropped beside her, and, tearing off his cap, unquestioningly laid his head in her lap.

"Does it ache?" she asked, softly.

"Yes," he murmured. "Rub it."

She passed her hand with a measured motion across his forehead, pushing up the heavy hair. She felt his face for an instant press closer to her knees; volumes of gratitude seemed expressed in the impulsive movement. She continued her stroking with a quiet, sisterly hand, her swelling heart suddenly choking her. She had him back, that she knew beyond a doubt. Broken, disillusioned, his heart seared by the image of another, he was hers, as he lay there thinking of that other. Hers to help, to heal, to make love her as much as she loved him. And a flood of human passion, the sensation she had decided—God forgive her! —disposed of forever, surged in her. Her eyes brimmed over with happy tears. Why

should there be any feeling of bitterness mixed in a feeling so sweet? Why should the hurt to one's vanity be remembered in such a situation? Why not be finally glad to give more than one received, offer something whole for something broken, bless beyond all desert? No—no—that other could never have loved him so! Fate had meant well by him in putting her out of reach; this sorrow of his should pass away and be as if it had never been. Chloris felt in herself such inexhaustible wells of tenderness and patience, she knew hers was the good title; she knew she could be sufficient —make Damon forget. Her heart sang a song of praise and victory, while her hand smoothed his forehead with the fancy that it brushed away the image of Cytherea, fatal line by line.

Ineffable fatigue drew her down from high serene thoughts to thoughts nearer earth. She ached; waves of unnatural sensation swept through her, but she would not move. The weight of his dear head was better than ease.

While she took patience till he should be ready to rise and go sensibly home to bed, a whimsical image formed in her brain: Herself, and to one side of her, a little higher, Cytherea, and to the other, a little lower, Chloe—and beyond Chloe, in the descending line, some poor woman, not pretty or winning at all, to whom Chloe must appear a half-divinity; and above Cytherea, in the ascending line, another fairer than she, for, when all was said, there must be in this world women even fairer than the great Cytherea, of whom she, perchance, lying awake in her queenly bed, would think with anguish, confessing herself helpless to struggle. Poor Cytherea, then, in her turn! Chloris framed a sincere wish for her continued happiness, and that in the event of despised love God should grant her to become a philosopher. And her imagination went on feebly, whimsically, weaving. Still another fairer still creature above Cytherea's victress — still another at the other end, to whom the envier of Chloe should be an object of envy—and so on, till the chain seemed to extend from the seraphs

down to the last of the most degraded race, and take a slightly humorous aspect. "It pleases the powers to be merry," thought Chloris, and was conscious of no irreverence in the conceit.

"Wake up, Chloris!" came Damon's voice, sounding more as it had used to sound, before he was so grown-up, and had untoward things happen to him in his sentiments.

"I have not been asleep!" she said, sheepishly, "except below my knees."

"I won't contradict you, but when I struck a light you were nodding and smiling away to yourself like a little China mandarin. Have you any idea of the time it is? Well, I won't enlighten you. What a crazy thing we have been doing! Come, dear, let me help you up. I hope to Heaven you haven't taken cold. Hello, can't you walk straight? What a brute I am! Take my arm—"

And laughing weakly and wearily, they set out staggering across the dim stubble-field that separated them from home.

"Dear old Chloris!" Damon murmured,

pressing her arm to his side—"Oh, child of the universe! You can never think what a comfort it is to have you home again. I feel more like myself. I think that to-night I shall sleep."

pressing her arm to his side. "Best girl in the universe! You can never think what a comfort it is to have you home again. I feel more like myself. I think that to-night I shall sleep."

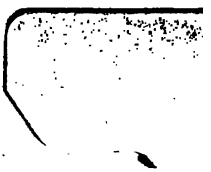
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